NEW

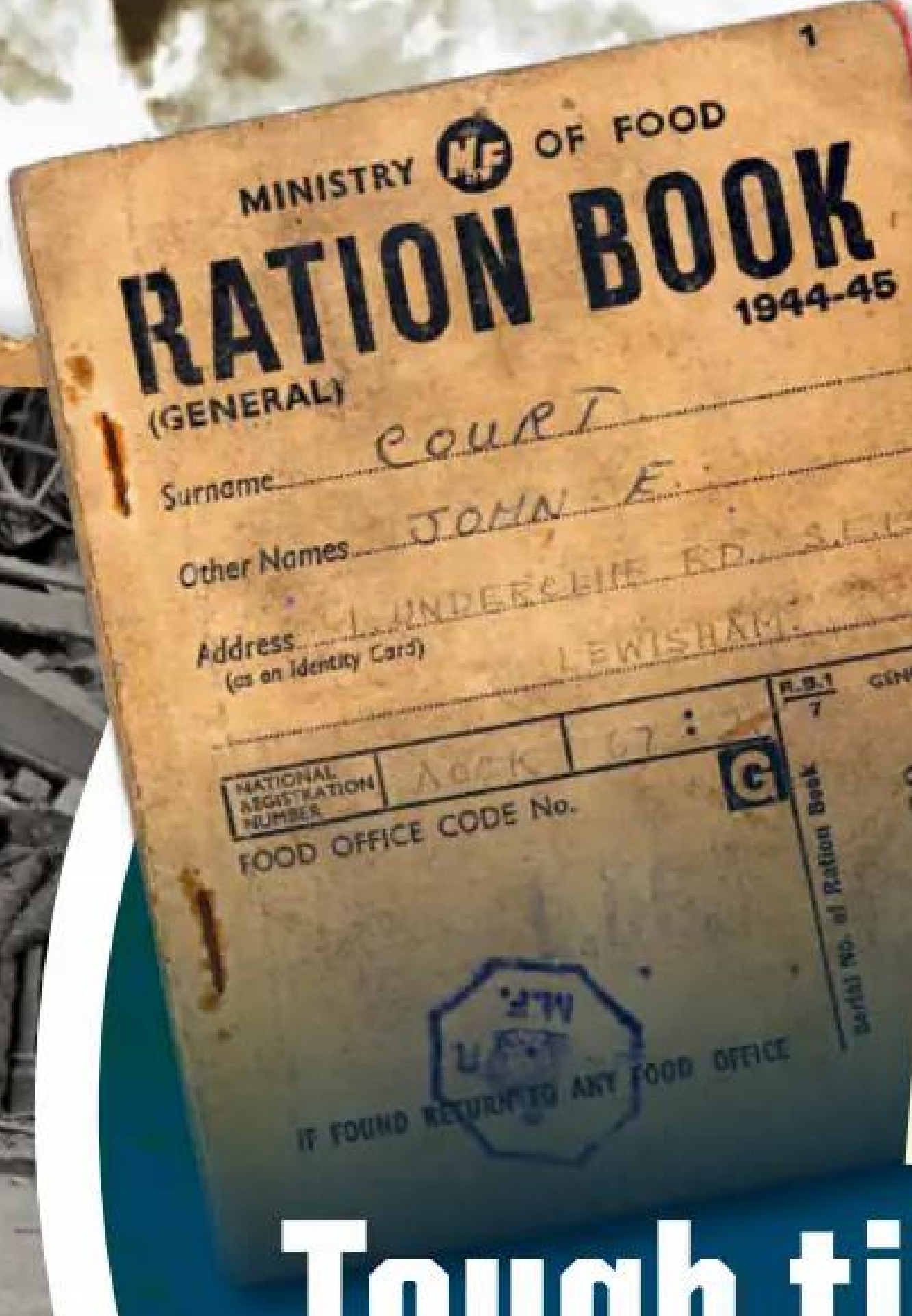
BRITAIN'S HOME FRONT

HOW A NATION UNITED TO FIGHT OFF THE THREAT OF INVASION

DISPATCH
SPECIAL LATE NEWS
WAR
-OFFICIAL

INSIDE **BRITAIN'S** COASTAL **DEFENCES**

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY



MINISTRY OF FOOD
RATION BOOK 1944-45
(GENERAL)
Surname COURT
Other Names JOHN F.
Address (as on Identity Card) LEWISHAM
NATIONAL REGISTRATION NUMBER
FOOD OFFICE CODE No.
IF FOUND RETURN TO ANY FOOD OFFICE

HELP BRITAIN FINISH THE JOB!

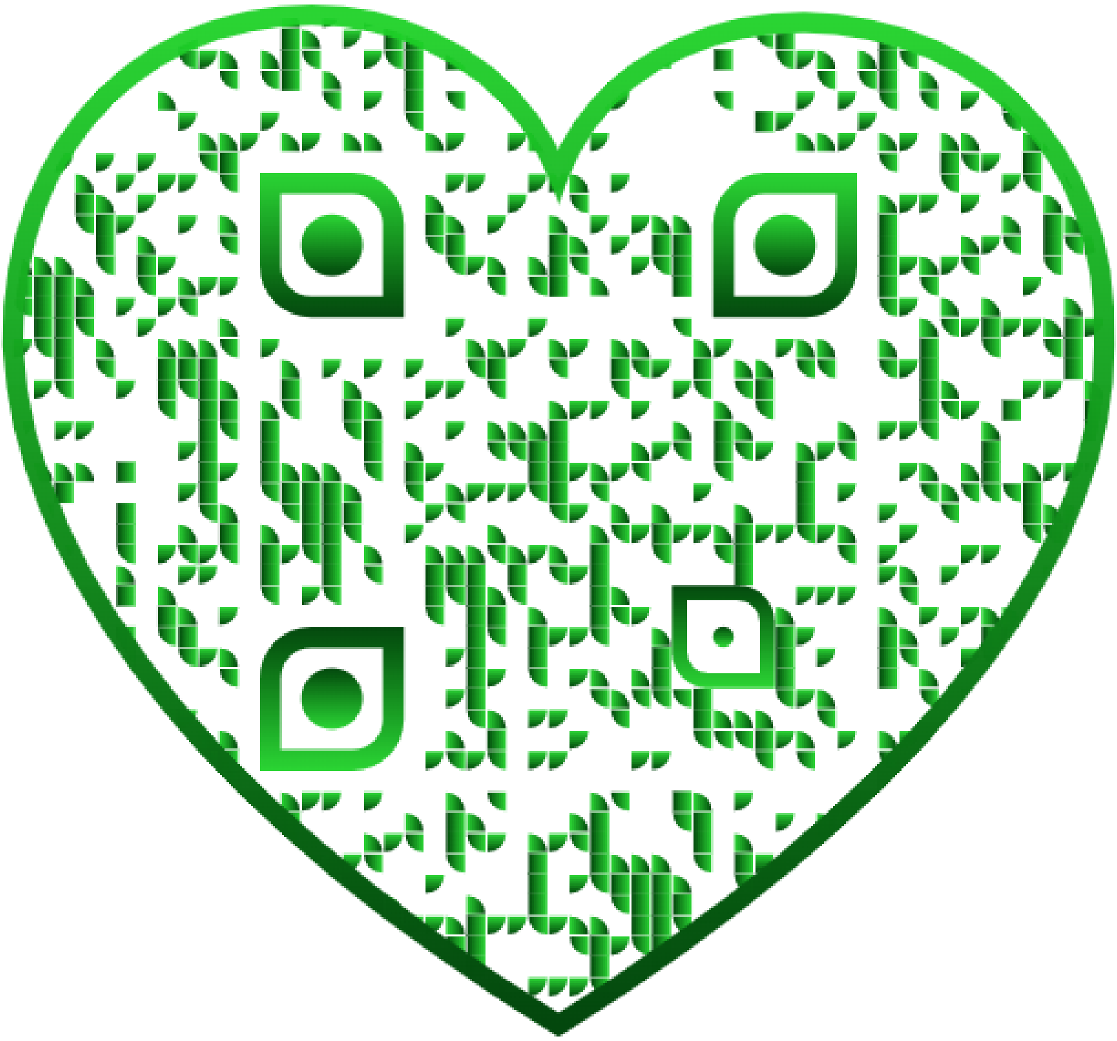
Tough times

Discover how Britain pulled together to cope with the hardships of war

HOME GUARD • THE BLITZ • BLACKOUT LONDON

Digital Edition

FUTURE
FIRST EDITION



LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER

So implored Winston Churchill in his first address to the House of Commons as prime minister on 13 May 1940 as Britain faced up to the sobering threat of a German invasion. Yet even before the first air raid sirens had begun to wail across the country, the British people had been preparing for conflict. From rushing children out of major cities to the countryside to bolstering its navy and raising a home army to fight off Hitler's armies, the nation had steeled itself for years of struggle prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. Yet as the Battle of Britain gave way to the Blitz, people strove to carry on as best they could, working wonders with meagre rations and enduring nightly blackouts. This is the story of how a beleaguered population banded together to pull through its darkest hour before toiling to rebuild in the aftermath of a hard-won victory. This is the tale of Britain at war.

CONTENTS

NO PEACE IN OUR TIME

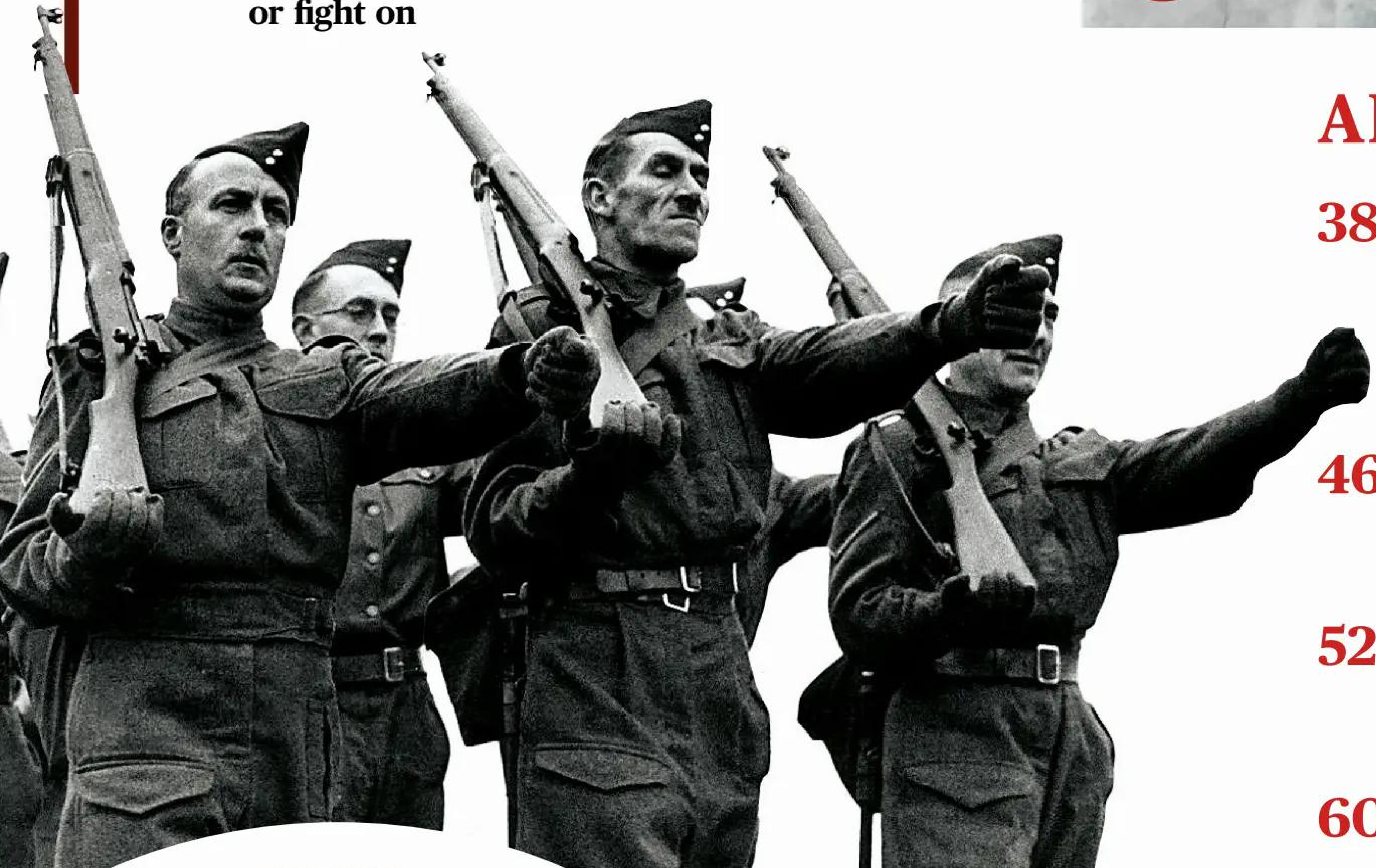
8 The drums of war
From building new fighter planes to issuing gas masks, Britain had been preparing for conflict in Europe long before Germany invaded Poland

12 "We will take your children to safety!"
Inside the complex operation to evacuate Britain's children

22 Home Guard
Far from a 'Dad's Army' of bumbling old men, these brave volunteers were well equipped to frustrate a Nazi invasion

30 A cabinet in crisis
In the summer of 1940 the British Government faced a stark decision: seek terms with Hitler or fight on

46



22

12

ALONE IN THE DARKNESS

38 Little ships, great escape
In May 1940, the BEF needed a miracle to escape the clutches of the rampant Wehrmacht. A plucky fleet of civilian vessels would deliver it against the odds

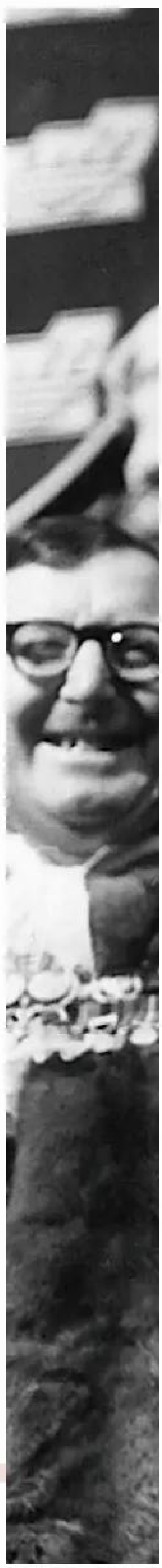
46 Britain's secret army
Meet the lethal guerrillas trained to unleash hell should the Germans land on British shores

52 Defending Britain
Explore the elaborate coastal defences constructed to hamper an invasion

60 Channel Islands: Life under the Nazis
While they may never have conquered Britain, for almost five years the Nazis ruled over Jersey and Guernsey

64 The dogfight begins
Determined to hold out to the last, the RAF fought valiantly to secure victory in the Battle of Britain

70 The women's auxiliary air force
It wasn't just the men who played their part in defending Britain's skies



KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

76 The Blitz: Britain under siege
Faced with relentless air raids, the British people struggled on through death and destruction for nine gruelling months

82 Inside a WWII Anderson shelter
Take a look around an air raid shelter

84 Blitz-busting tips
From fake stockings to replacing bananas with boiled parsnips, rationing required Brits to think outside the box

90 Make do and mend
How a scarcity of materials inspired a wave of creative clothing

96 Underground: The forgotten work of the Bevin Boys
With an energy crisis looming, the country needed an army of workers to operate its coal mines, men whose contributions were crucial to the war effort

98 Crime in blackout London
When the lights went out, it wasn't just the wrath of the German bombers that Londoners needed to fear...

VICTORY IN SIGHT

106 Remembering Bletchley
We talk to Ruth Bourne about her fascinating time working at Britain's codebreaking HQ

112 Britain's fifth column
While the majority of the population worked tirelessly to aid their country in its hour of need, some chose to betray the nation by plotting to help the enemy

120 A friendly invasion
Allies though they may have been, welcoming hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to Britain had its challenges

124 A new struggle: Rebuilding Britain
The war was finally over, but transforming an exhausted nation would require many more years of hardship

NO PEACE IN OUR TIME

8 **The drums of war**
From building new fighter planes to issuing gas masks, Britain had been preparing for conflict in Europe long before Germany invaded Poland

12 **“We will take your children to safety!”**
Inside the complex operation to evacuate Britain’s children

22 **Home Guard**
Far from a ‘Dad’s Army’ of bumbling old men, these brave volunteers were well equipped to frustrate a Nazi invasion

30 **A cabinet in crisis**
In the summer of 1940 the British Government faced a stark decision: seek terms with Hitler or fight on

Image: Getty Images

THE DRUMS OF WAR

As efforts at diplomacy in Europe collapsed, Britain prepared for a deadly struggle with Germany

WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON**

In 1939, gas mask demonstrations became commonplace across Britain

In 1938, Neville Chamberlain presented the people of Britain with his now-infamous "piece of paper", a moment that would come to shape his legacy. This piece of paper was the Munich Agreement, the result of a negotiation that was supposed to settle the increasingly fractious relationship with Hitler's Germany and see off the threat of imminent conflict. The non-aggression pact was an act of desperate appeasement that would not hold, but by the time it collapsed into war on 3 September 1939, Britain had already been making plans for the outbreak of hostilities. When war erupted, however, it would find itself far from prepared.

Throughout the 1930s, Germany was rearming and preparing for aggressive expansion, steeling itself to confront any resistance from other nations. The Third Reich grew increasingly vocal and belligerent in both its aims and complaints, and when it moved to annex neighbouring lands, the British Government faced the very real prospect of war on the horizon. In order to ensure that the country was as prepared as it could be, on the home front and in the armed forces alike, focused new programmes were put into place that would ready the country to face the unthinkable – another war with Germany.

Arming against an old foe

At the start of the war, the Royal Navy was already the strongest in the world, though its fleet was padded with older ships or those badly in need of work. In addition to these old faithfuls, however, throughout the 1930s the country had expanded the fleet with new warships and submarines. New battleships went into production and a number of existing vessels, including several capital ships, underwent extensive refurbishment. Ironically, this rearmament, which took place throughout the decade, was not to meet the threat or war, but to ensure peace across the sprawling British Empire.

Following WWI, the Royal Air Force had been allowed to shrink in response to the wrongly held belief that another war was unlikely. However, as Germany's rearmament programme flourished throughout the 1930s, the RAF rushed to play catch up. In 1934, 42 squadrons existed, with 800 aircraft at their disposal. Thanks to a major investment in production and training, by 1939 this had expanded into 157 squadrons and

> *"The deadline came and went with no promise forthcoming from Germany that their forces would be pulled out of Poland"*

3,700 aircraft. Chamberlain had increased the RAF's funding both as chancellor and prime minister, until it had surpassed that of both the Royal Navy and the Army.

The British Army, meanwhile, had shrunk substantially since WWI and was chronically underfunded. In order of priority, military funding generally went first to the Royal Navy then to the RAF before the Army was to see a penny. Even at the outbreak of war, the British Army was smaller than many others and made up entirely of willing recruits. With much of the army dispersed throughout the empire and with the British able to muster only two armoured divisions in contrast to Germany's seven, it was inevitable that conscription would come into play. This became a reality in May 1939, when the Military Training Act ushered in the first period of conscription in the run up to war.

This would be a war that reached British shores and it was vital that the British people were prepared. As tensions mounted the public were issued with an avalanche of information. Government money was poured into campaigns that informed people of the importance of observing blackouts, of the very real prospect of rationing and of the danger of air raids. In 1938, the government began issuing gas masks to the public in preparation for potential poison gas bombs being unleashed by the Luftwaffe.

In 1937, a year before gas mask distribution began, the Air Raid Wardens Service was established, and by September of the following year 700,000 volunteers had been enrolled. These wardens would be responsible for enforcing blackouts, sounding sirens and helping both the public and the emergency services in the event of air raids. To support their efforts, families and communities were offered assistance to build their own shelters, with more than 400,000 Anderson shelters being supplied to British homes. With more than a million casualties feared should the Luftwaffe attack Britain, the government prepared for carnage and ordered a million coffins in which to bury the dead.

As the threat of war gathered speed throughout 1939, the government established the Ministry of Supply. Under the watchful eye of the Minister of Supply, Leslie Burgin (who held the office from July 1939 to May 1940), this new department would co-ordinate the supply of equipment to every branch of the armed forces, with its responsibilities and portfolio expanding as the war progressed.

Despite its frantic spending and planning, Britain was still not on a war footing as things reached crisis point in the summer of 1939. Though far more prepared than it had been, there was still some way to go. The world, however, would not wait.

In 1938, the Anschluss saw Germany annex Austria and bring it into the German Reich; Hitler then went on to seize the Sudetenland, a German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, before moving on to invade the rest of the country. German sights then turned towards Poland.

In response Britain and France gave Poland their guarantee that, should the country come under threat from Hitler's troops, they would declare war on Germany. Sure enough, on 1 September 1939, German forces marched into Poland across three borders, triggering what would become WWII.

Chamberlain's ultimatum

On 2 September 1939, Neville Chamberlain issued an ultimatum to Adolf Hitler: either Germany would immediately withdraw its troops from Poland or "a state of war will exist between Great Britain and Germany".

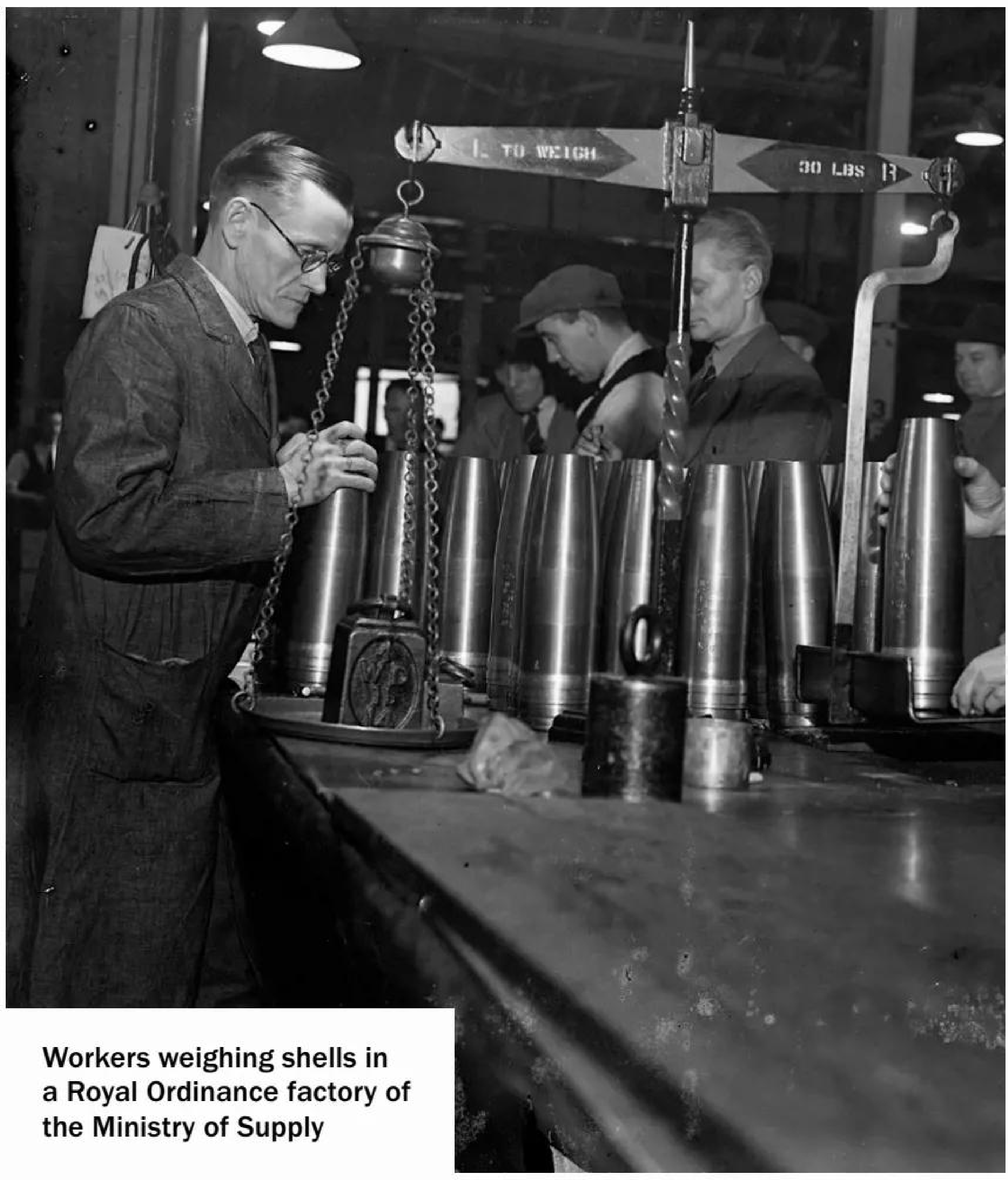
A deadline of 11 a.m. on 3 September was set for the German response. The deadline came and went with no promise forthcoming from Germany that their forces would be pulled out of Poland. With a heavy heart, at 11:15 a.m. that same day, Neville Chamberlain made what would become a famous five-minute broadcast on the Home Service to the people of Britain:

"I am speaking to you from the cabinet room at 10 Downing Street. This morning the British ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany. You can imagine what a bitter blow it is to me that all my long struggle to win peace has failed."

The news that Britain was at war with Germany left a tense nation reeling. At 11:28 a.m., just a few minutes after Chamberlain made his broadcast, air raid sirens sounded across the sunny capital city. These test sirens sent Londoners rushing for shelter, but thankfully this time there was no threat. However, it wouldn't be long before German aircraft were soaring over British cities.

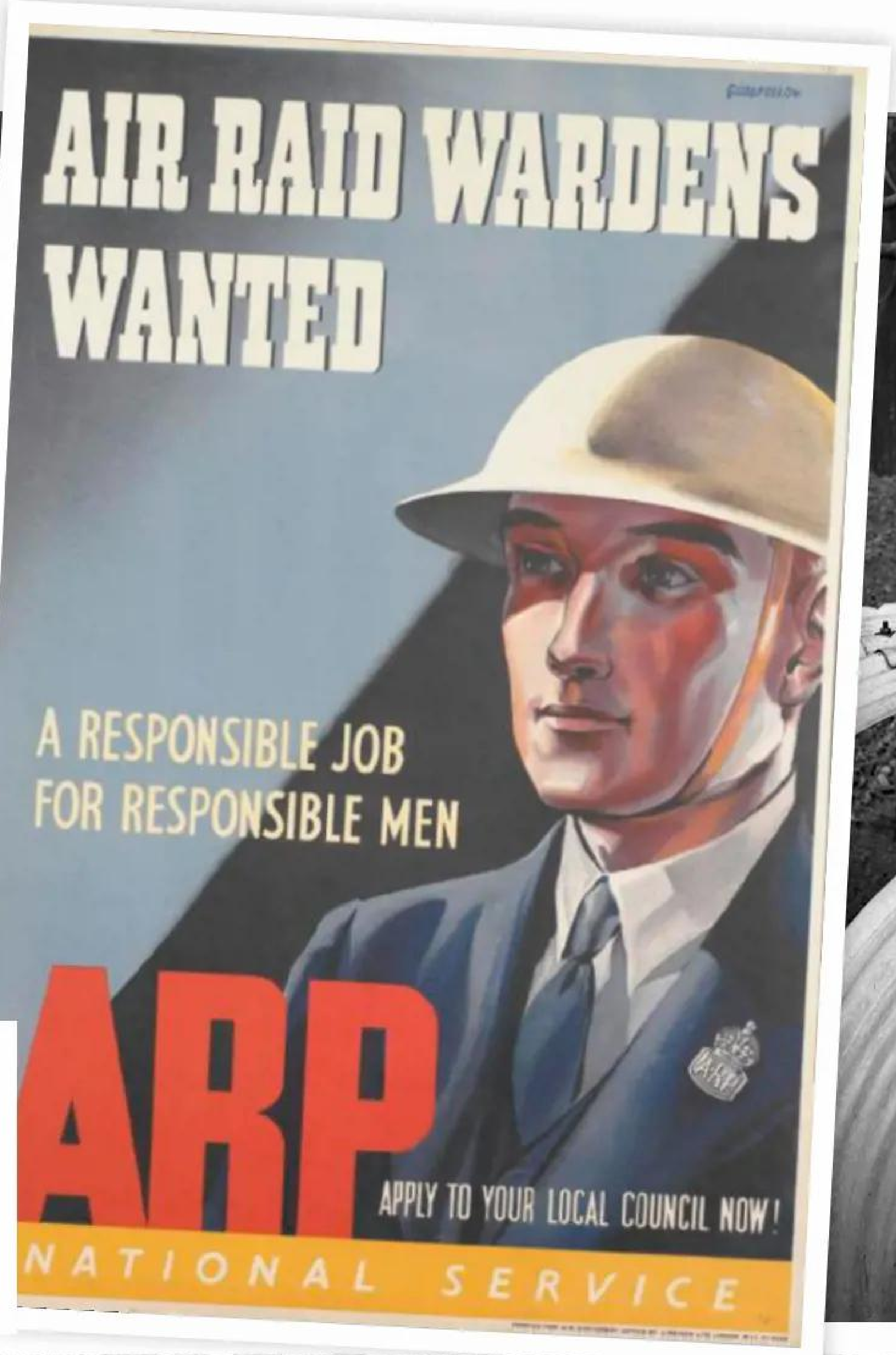
Cinemas, theatres and other entertainment venues were immediately shuttered in an effort to protect the public in the event of attack. However, these closed venues were reopened within a month, albeit with strict rules regarding their opening hours.

A sense of apprehension settled over the nation as the British people braced for imminent attack. Yet soon enough the new normal had been absorbed by the public and it would be business as usual. As the world went to war, the home fires of Britain were still burning.



Workers weighing shells in a Royal Ordinance factory of the Ministry of Supply

Conscription was introduced to swell the ranks of the armed forces


AIR RAID WARDENS WANTED
A RESPONSIBLE JOB FOR RESPONSIBLE MEN
ARP
APPLY TO YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL NOW!
NATIONAL SERVICE

The air raid wardens were familiar figures, ensuring the blackout was observed and helping citizens

British home owners began constructing government-issued Anderson shelters prior to the war

Appeasing a monster

AS HITLER'S PLANS EXPANDED IN 1938, CHAMBERLAIN STILL SOUGHT A DESPERATE PEACE

Throughout the 1930s, the German Government tested and eventually disregarded the limits of the Treaty of Versailles. As they rearmed and began their aggressive acquisition of *Lebensraum* (living space), the threat became ever more apparent. Neville Chamberlain, however, chose appeasement in a bid to avoid war.

Despite Germany annexing Austria and then the Sudetenland, Chamberlain still clung to the hope of securing a deal that could stop a conflagration. In 1938, he flew out to Munich to meet with Hitler. In a broadcast to the nation, Chamberlain explained that he would not risk the British Empire over "a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbour".

The Munich Agreement of September 1938, a discussion from which Czechoslovakia was excluded, agreed the cession of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia to Germany in return for Hitler renouncing any claims to the rest of the country. It was an agreement the German leader had no intention of adhering to.

No Czechoslovakian Government representative was even present at the conference held in Munich on 29–30 September 1938 that drew up the agreement. At this conference, the British, French and Italian governments utterly ignored Czechoslovakia's sovereignty in the interests of appeasement. In doing so, they laid the foundations for war.

Returning from Munich, Chamberlain brandishes the paper signed by Adolf Hitler

“WE WILL TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO SAFETY!”

Operation Pied Piper and the forgotten evacuated teachers of WWII

WORDS **GILLIAN MAWSON**

During WWII, thousands of British teachers were evacuated with their pupils, yet we hear their stories far less often than those of child evacuees. Sadly the majority of teachers have now passed away, but their surviving diaries and private correspondence make their wartime memories all the more precious. These men and women took on a great responsibility. Cut off from their own families for the duration of the war, they not only educated the children in their care but did their best to monitor their health and happiness. They visited local organisations such as the Women's Voluntary Service and Red Cross to ask for clothing for their pupils. Crucially, they provided hope and comfort to the children when they were homesick or emotionally distressed.

On 1 September 1939, the British Government's plans for evacuation swung into operation and millions of schoolchildren, teachers, mothers and infants were moved before war was declared on 3 September. In the weeks leading up to the evacuation, teachers had liaised with parents regarding the preparations for evacuation and carried out evacuation rehearsals in their schools. In her school log book, Maureen Brass described the preparations that were made for the evacuation of St Dominic's Infants School in London.

"The week before the evacuation, we gave parents lists of what the children should bring with them, made labels showing their names, the name of the school and the school number. Ours was school number 0302. On the morning of September 1st 1939, the children assembled in school around 7.00 a.m. The staff had arrived at 6.00 a.m. At 8.00 a.m. we set out from the school, waved off by tearful mothers, grandmothers and others. The groups, Seniors, Juniors and Infants, with staff and helpers, walked in fours to Kentish Town West Station. We all boarded a train that was waiting for us and set out into the unknown."

Mr A. Wilshere was asked to prepare for the evacuation of pupils in Ilford, Essex, and he made the following entries in his diary:

"Friday, August 25 – Evacuation duty in Ilford has fallen to Mr Dinmore, Mr Bryce and me. My party, which will consist of children under five with their mothers, together with expectant mothers, will be known as a non-school party. It will number at least 650 and will go from Southpark School. Thursday, August 31 – We learnt that the government has ordered the evacuation to take place tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday. I am going on Sunday – I know not where to. My party totals 800."

Although some children and teachers were evacuated by coach or boat, the majority travelled to their billets by train. As a result, strong memories remain with them of emotional scenes at railway stations and their subsequent journeys into the unknown. When a large group of children from Hackney, London, boarded a train, their parents gathered to wave them off. One of their teachers, Miss Griffith, wrote in her diary: "Will any of us ever forget the departure, the route lined with sad but relieved parents?"

In his memoirs, nine-year-old John Hawkins described the kindness of his teacher when his school was evacuated from Birmingham: "When

> *"The teacher touched Mum's arm and said softly, 'You can leave them now, Mother, they'll be safe with me'"*

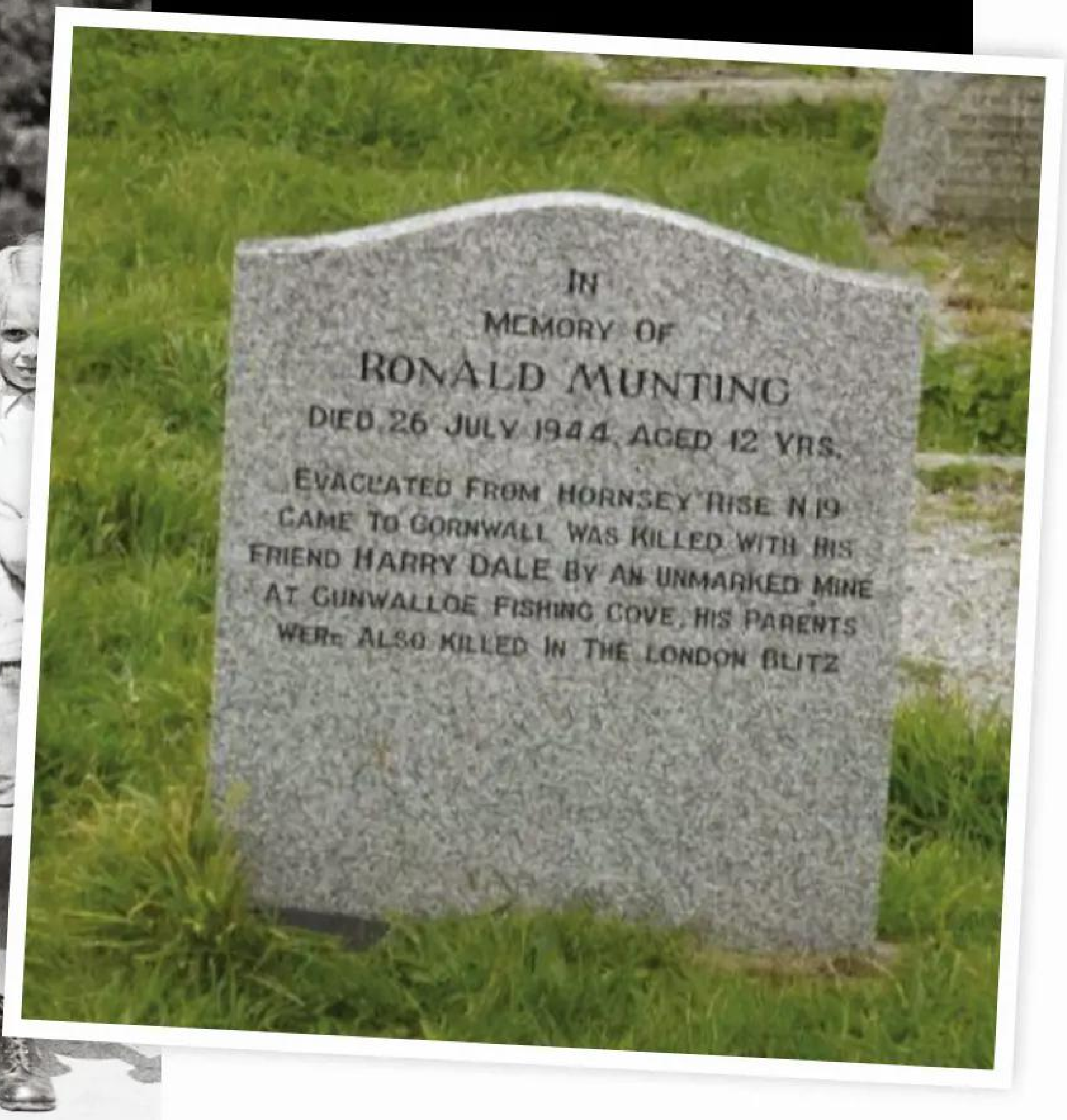
"They were supposed to be sent to safety!"

MANY EVACUEES DIED IN THE SUPPOSEDLY 'SAFE' AREAS TO WHICH THEY WERE SENT

The aim of the evacuation scheme was to send children and adults to safety until the war was over, but few places in Britain were completely free from danger. Air raids, unexploded bombs, guns and minefields posed risks to evacuees wherever they were sent. Many evacuees died in the supposedly 'safe' areas to which they were sent. Fixed anti-invasion defences also posed a very real risk to evacuees, though the intended victim was supposed to be an invading enemy.

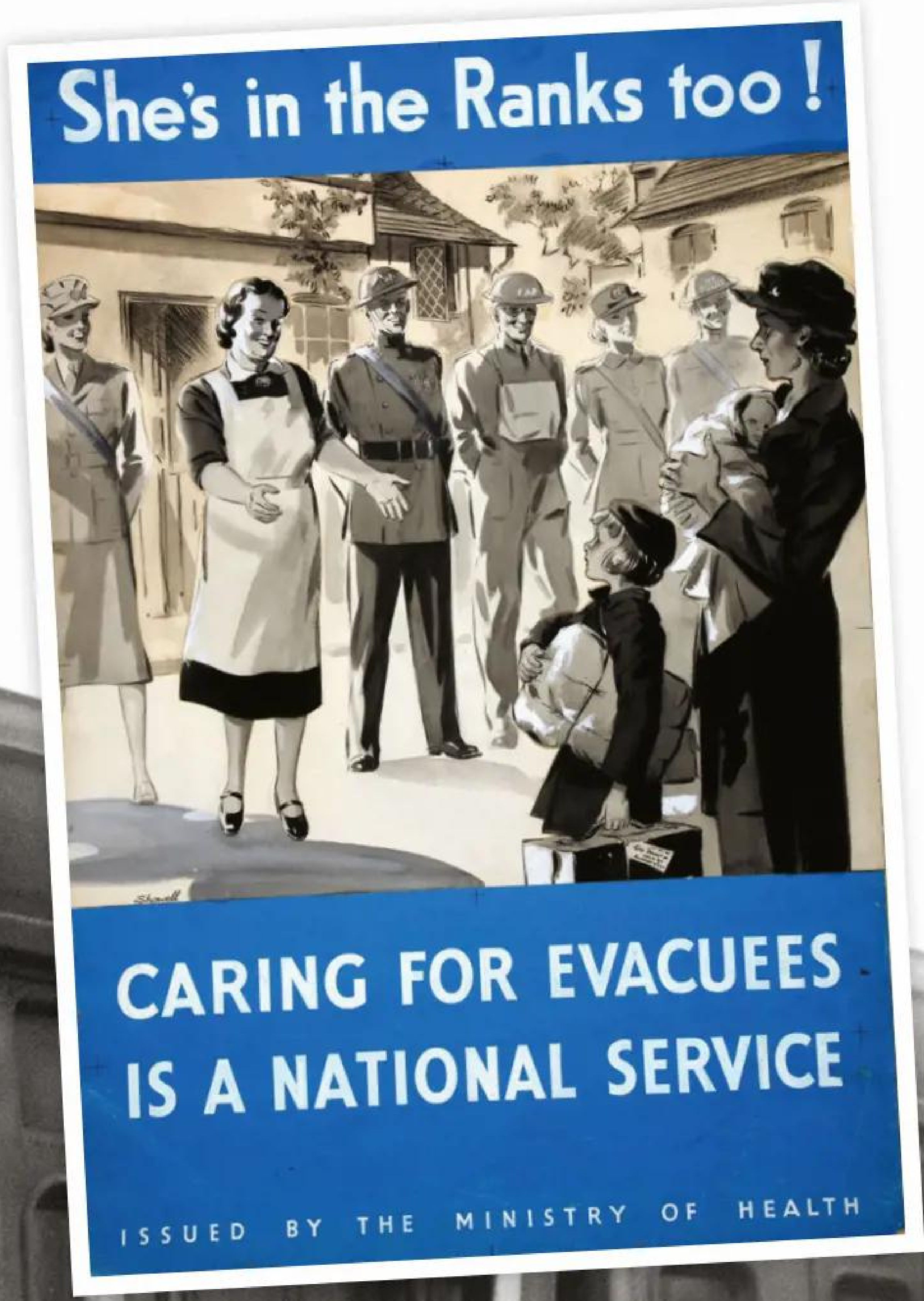
A fatal explosion occurred on 26 July 1944, when six boys climbed through barbed-wire fencing into an anti-tank minefield on Gunwalloe beach in Cornwall. The only witness, an auxiliary coastguard, saw the boys climbing through the wire from his lookout post half a mile away. In his statement to the inquest into the death of two of the boys – Harry Dale, a local boy, and Ronald Munting, an evacuee – the coastguard said that when he saw the boys trying to enter the minefield he waved a red flag and blew his warning whistle.

One of the gang, 11-year-old Peter Reed, said that Harry and Ronald, himself and four others, went towards the minefield. Harry and Ronald entered first, by getting through the wire fencing, and shortly afterwards the explosion occurred. When asked by the coroner if he had noticed the danger warning notices, Peter replied, "The only notice I have ever read is one which states that there is danger when a red flag is flying and planes are exercising."


IN
MEMORY OF
RONALD MUNTING
DIED 26 JULY 1944, AGED 12 YRS.
EVACUATED FROM HORNSEY RISE N.19
CAME TO CORNWALL WAS KILLED WITH HIS
FRIEND HARRY DALE BY AN UNMARKED MINE
AT GUNWALLOE FISHING COVE, HIS PARENTS
WERE ALSO KILLED IN THE LONDON BLITZ

Initially around a million schoolchildren and their teachers were evacuated

my Mum, sister and I arrived at school that day our teacher was marking names off a clip-board. The teacher touched Mum’s arm and said softly, ‘You can leave them now, Mother, they’ll be safe with me.’ Mum’s lips begin to tremble – she crouched down and kissed us tenderly on the cheek. Then on we children and teachers marched, past the houses, shops and factories that we all knew so well, from which poured housewives, factory workers, shop assistants, men and women, young and old, to loudly cheer us on our way.


She's in the Ranks too!
CARING FOR EVACUEES IS A NATIONAL SERVICE
ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

“When we reached Tyseley station, we were swiftly but gently ushered into a compartment. Suddenly, everyone turned in amazement to see a frantic mother dash from the crowd and blindly force her way through the barrier onto the platform, to scoop her tiny, frightened daughter into her arms. She then ran, sobbing bitterly, from the station.”

Teachers also wrote about the arrival of their schools in the evacuee reception areas. Mary Richardson taught at Cork Street School, Camberwell, and travelled with her pupils to Kent. Mary’s daughter, Fi Unwin, shared her mother’s story. “Each teacher was assigned ten children, and after a long train journey, we arrived at Sevenoaks, where we were neatly put into cattle pens to be counted. We then caught another train and arrived at Brasted station, which is quite a distance from the village, so when we arrived at the church hall we were a sorry sight – tired, thirsty and afraid.

“Mothers came and chose us, and I was seized upon by the lady at the village shop and bakehouse. We had promised to try to keep families together, but with four Peabody girls and four Sparrowhawk boys, this proved impossible. Some of the younger children had wet themselves and their clothing was dirty, ragged and unsuitable. However, the Kent ladies were brilliant: extra clothing was found, menus were changed to accommodate townies who never ate ‘greens’ and cuddly toys were given to comfort the weepy ones.”

Evacuated teachers had to ensure that children who had left with just a small bag were properly clothed during their years away from home. Some teachers actually approached the local newspaper office to ask if they could place an appeal for clothing in the paper. A Cheshire newspaper printed the following appeal: “Boots and clothing for 90 boys are needed in Hale. These boys are in our midst through no fault of their own. Cash donations also welcome.”

As a result of such appeals, local communities donated clothing and footwear to thousands of child evacuees. Teachers also approached the Women’s Voluntary Service (WVS) to ask for clothing for their pupils. When Mr Percy Martel brought his pupils to Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, he relied heavily on the help of the local WVS. His diary entry for October 1940 shows that the weather had become much colder and he was anxious about the children’s clothing: “Today we all had to spend hours in the school air raid shelter, a wet, slippery muddy lake and the roof is leaking. To take children from a warm school into such an atmosphere is scandalous and with, as yet, no winter clothes.”

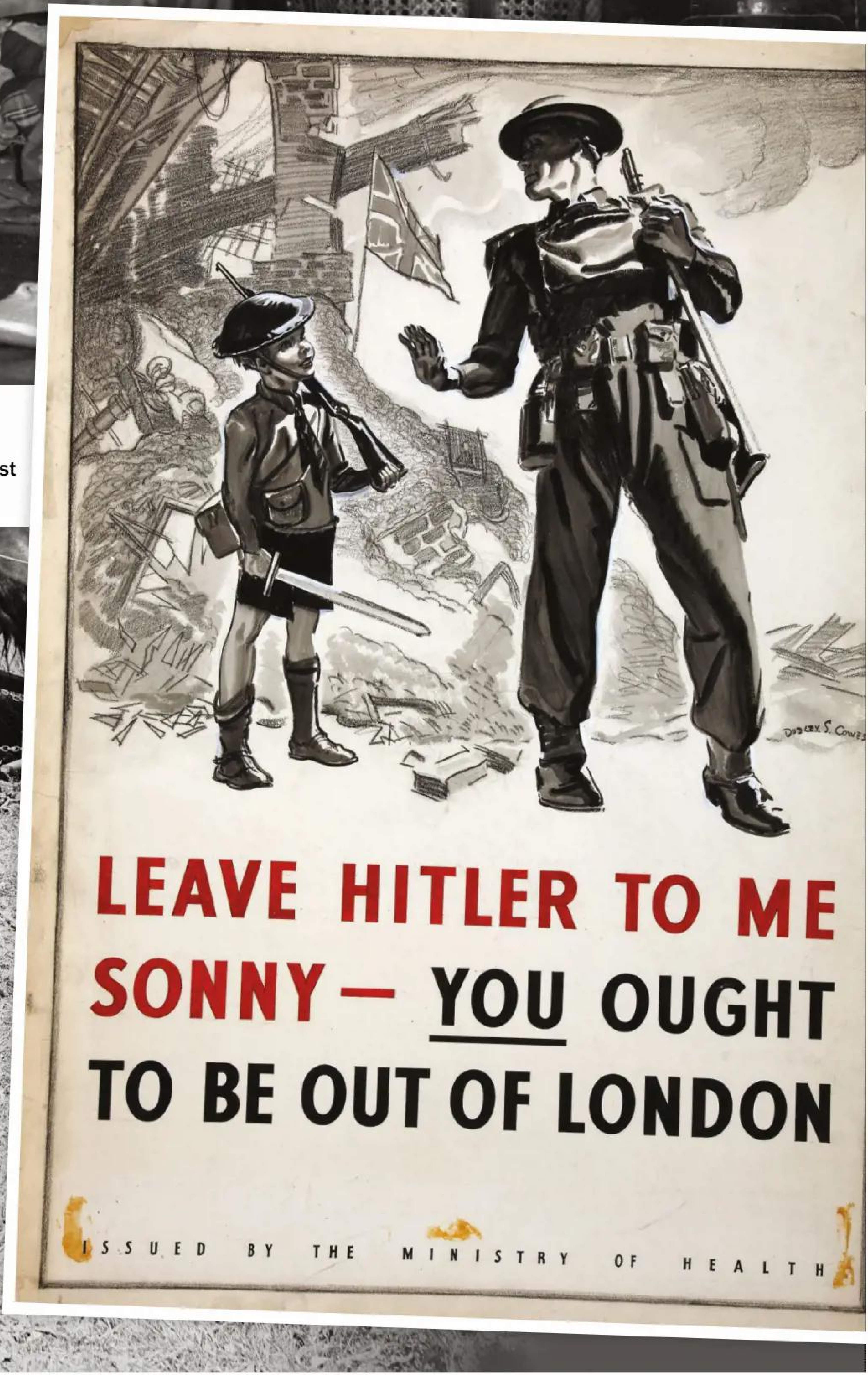
Luckily the ladies of the WVS came to the rescue. They quickly organised several fundraising events and were able to supply the evacuees with warm clothing.

For the youngsters, being evacuated could be both a scary and exciting experience

Children were inspected to ensure they were in good health

4763
895
1864
230
7752
Ans 7752

For many of the young evacuees, it was their first experience of rural life


Dudley S. Cowes
LEAVE HITLER TO ME SONNY — YOU OUGHT TO BE OUT OF LONDON
ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

> *"It was a huge responsibility for those adults, in charge of 200 boys"*

Mr Martel praised the WVS in his diary: "The work done and the sympathy extended to us by these ladies is indeed marvellous. As our troubles increase, their sympathetic support and kindness seem to attain greater heights."

When Wimbledon Central School was evacuated by train to Chichester, the children were immediately put onto buses. However, four of the buses were accidentally sent to a different destination. One of the teachers, Mr C. Lee, recorded this event in his school log book, and on 5 September he wrote, "Continued to check the houses where our pupils have been billeted. Children very happy but bewildered. I then went to the evacuee distribution centre to find the exact destination of the other four buses but no news." He spent two full days visiting local officials before he finally discovered the whereabouts of the rest of his pupils.

When the children arrived at their new billets, their teachers told them that they must write their new address on a postcard and send it, together with a short message, to their parents. The teachers suggested messages that would cheer up worried parents, such as, "Dear Mum and Dad, am living with nice people. Don't worry about me." However, this had tragic consequences for one little boy and his family. He left his new billet, placed his postcard, with the above message, in the letter box then went for a walk. Sadly he fell into a canal and drowned. His family were advised of his death that evening, but two days later his postcard with its poignant little message arrived at their home.

There is a common misconception that most evacuees were sent from poor urban housing to the countryside where the facilities were far superior. Even today, some people still assume that all evacuees came from inner city slums, were dirty, had head lice and were not house trained. Gateshead teacher Jessie Hetherington talked about the poor facilities that she and her pupils had encountered in Bishop Auckland: "We were welcomed warmly by our prospective hosts and, after distribution to our new homes, a long day ended. Mine was to a village comprised of long rows of pit houses with outside 'netties' (toilets) and very few bathrooms. Saturday was spent seeing that the children were settling in. They had all come from a new housing estate where every house had an indoor toilet and bathroom, but here most were housed in homes without either – as I was. The kindness of most of the hosts made up for the lack of amenities."

From May 1940, further waves of evacuation occurred in Britain when Germany invaded Belgium, Holland and France. Now children from the south and east coasts of England were moved inland to safety. A House of Commons report shows that one MP declared, "In the weeks that lie ahead, none of us knows whether he may not be evacuated from some place which at the moment appears to be quite safe!" Then, on 20 June 1940, around 25,000 Channel Island children and teachers were evacuated

By the end of WWII, approximately 3.5 million people, mainly children, had experienced evacuation

The poetry of wartime evacuation

HOW THE EVACUATED TEACHERS ENCOURAGED EVACUEES TO SHARE THEIR FEELINGS THROUGH POETRY

During the war, many evacuees wrote poems to describe their experiences, and often it was their teachers who encouraged them to do this. Evacuees wrote about their involvement in the war effort, their thoughts of home and family and their feelings regarding the eventual return home. Some described the joy of 'Victory in Europe' Day, while others revealed their sadness at leaving behind the 'foster families' who had cared for them and whom they had come to love. Poems about victory and the return home are mostly provided by evacuees from Guernsey who came to England and Scotland in 1940. Perhaps this is because they felt physically separated from their homes and families by the English Channel.

Many evacuees composed poems in their later years, often after attending evacuee reunions. After talking about their experiences with each other, they wrote poetry that examined the effect that wartime evacuation had upon their lives. Kathleen Barber was seven when she was evacuated from Lowestoft to Glossop, Derbyshire, with her younger brother. Fifty years later, she attended a meeting of the Lowestoft Evacuee Association where she read out her poem, 'The Market Place'. The opening verse describes the evacuee 'selection process' that had occurred in Glossop Market Place in June 1940.

The woman viewed the market place
Its stalls still standing bare;
A silent witness to a day
That she remembered there.
When children stood around the place,
Or sat down on a stall.
Then people came and picked them out,
She clearly could recall.
For some a boy, for some a girl
For some just one of each.
Her memory spanned so many years
That day's events to reach.
Some had wept, all were scared,
Thank God that town held folk who cared.

The president's wife and the young evacuee

HOW ONE YOUNG GIRL BECAME A WARTIME PEN PAL TO MRS ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

When Father Bleach brought Guernsey's La Chaumière Catholic School to Cheshire, he faced huge financial difficulties. However, his fortunes changed when he discovered the existence of the 'Foster Parent Plan for Children Affected by War' (FPP). The FPP asked people to donate a regular amount to provide a child with food and shelter. They were also asked to write letters to the child to show that someone cared about them, creating what we now call 'child sponsorship'. In November 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, sponsored three FPP children. One was Paulette Le Mescam, one of the children at La Chaumière School. Paulette became 'Foster child 306' to Mrs Roosevelt, who became 'Foster Parent 200.' Soon, many of Paulette's school friends were sponsored by Americans.

When Paulette received letters from the 'White House' and wrote letters back, the address meant little to her. She explained, "I was only 11 years old, there was no television then so we didn't hear about famous people. To me, she was just my Aunty Eleanor. I remember receiving some Lux soap which had a lovely smell, and a lovely red dress."

In May 1943, Paulette discovered who 'Aunty Eleanor' actually was and spoke on BBC radio about the work of the FPP and about Mrs Roosevelt. When the Channel Islands were liberated on 9 May 1945, Paulette received a final letter from Mrs Roosevelt and an invitation to visit the White House. However, Paulette was unable to accept this offer: "I hadn't the money or support to enable me to do this. Cut off from my Guernsey family, Aunty Eleanor's letters were the only correspondence I received during the war."

While the majority of children were taken to rural parts of Britain, such as the ones shown above, some were shipped off as far away as Canada and Australia

FEEDING STUFFS
BDY 486

to England, just days before their islands were occupied by Germany. Mrs Marjorie Atkins' diary described the evacuation of her pupils from Amherst Girls' School in Guernsey: "News came through at about 9 p.m. that things were getting very dangerous and that a ship was on its way to fetch us and we must be back at school by 3 a.m! By now most of the children were in bed while their parents were making the necessary arrangements. Gradually, wide-eyed sleepy girls came with bewildered parents and we had to tick them off on our list as they arrived."

Britain sent ships of all descriptions, including coal barges and mail boats, to transport the children and teachers across the English Channel to Weymouth. After they disembarked, they were taken into the Pavilion Theatre where they received tea and sandwiches, gave their personal details and underwent a brief health check. In 1975, Guernsey teacher Miss Grace Fry shared her story with the Guernsey Retired Teachers Association.

"We had only been in Weymouth for a few minutes when an air raid took place. My pupils and I were pushed out of the building onto a bus then, to my horror, the driver locked the door and disappeared. After an hour, I thought, 'Well, this is the end, if a bomb falls on us, I hope it happens quickly!' Then the driver unlocked the door and said 'Out!' We were then sent to the railway station. Young soldiers began to push the children onto a train, then suddenly this big major came out of the darkness and said 'Madam will you go on with your children?!' and I said 'But where?' Well, the train started to move, and a young lieutenant came running down the platform, grabbed my hand and said 'Can you run?' and we set off at a terrific lick! A steward appeared at the open train door and this young soldier pushed me into his arms, and then off we went. We were sent to Pollokshields, Glasgow, where one of the volunteers asked me if my group were Belgian!"

It may appear strange that Channel Island evacuees were sent to the industrial towns and cities of northern England and to Glasgow, but the only railway lines available at that time led straight into those areas. Few evacuees were given any idea of their final destinations, despite the efforts of the teachers to obtain information. Guernsey teacher Alec Rose said, "I repeatedly asked the guard about our destination and was eventually told, 'You're going to Oldham – and God help you!' The guard was referring to a town of coal pits and slag heaps."

The Channel Island evacuees relied very heavily on the care and guidance of their teachers as they were totally cut off from their own parents for five long years.

Although many of Britain's evacuees received loving care from their wartime foster parents, others did not. Children endured physical and mental cruelty at the hands of unsuitable hosts because billets were not fully vetted before children were placed there. Luckily, some children were 'rescued' from these terrible situations because their teachers noticed their unhappiness or observed bruises and marks. Peggy and Betty White were evacuated to Oxford with their teachers and lived very happily in the home of a local couple, Mr and Mrs Murphy. However, when Mrs Murphy was due to have a baby, the girls had to move out. Peggy recalled that their next billet was very different.

"We moved in with Mrs Fisher who turned out to be the most wicked woman we had ever met. From the very next day we were beaten and made to do all the housework before going to school. We had to get up at five each morning and we were sent to bed as soon as we got in from school. As an extra punishment we would be shut, one at a time, in a dark coal-shed all night. We lived there for about a year, which to us seemed like forever. One day Betty's teacher, Mrs Payne, saw the terrible bruises on her. She questioned us both, and we said that Mrs Fisher would kill us if we ever told anyone. Mrs Payne took us back to the house and told us to pack our belongings while she had words with Mrs Fisher. Then we all left. As we walked along the road in the gathering dusk, Mrs Payne said, 'Where would you like to live most of all?' Betty and I cried in unison, 'With Mrs Murphy.' She replied, 'That's just where we are going.' We skipped the rest of the way there. Mrs Murphy cried when she saw us and so did we."

"I wasn't going to have children... I had had enough with all that during the war"

In some cases, schools were evacuated to open-air camps in the countryside. When Derby School was evacuated to Amber Valley Camp in 1940, the accompanying teachers suddenly became full-time 'foster parents' to 200 boys. Elisabeth Bowden shared her story with the *Derby Evening Telegraph*.

"My father was headmaster of Derby School and Mother and I moved into the camp with him. We lived in a bungalow while the pupils and the other teachers were billeted around the camp in wooden huts. It was a huge responsibility for those adults, in charge of 200 boys. Mother had a petrol allowance because she drove the emergency vehicle. Several times she had to take boys with broken arms and that sort of thing to the hospital."

It is clear that the teachers who remained with their evacuated pupils carried a huge burden of responsibility. Miss Grace Fry's life was completely changed by her experience of caring for 100 children. In a 1975 interview for the Guernsey Retired Teachers' Association, she said, "It was the evacuation that decided me: I wasn't going to have children, because I had had enough with all that during the war."

The child evacuees have never forgotten the care they received from their teachers. John Davis said, "My memory is of the unfailing kindness of the staff at a time when their own personal lives must have been under great stress, as well as the responsibility of teaching and caring for such a large number of children in very difficult circumstances."

ONE DOZEN
REPUTED QUARTS
(26 oz.)
ONE DOZEN
REPUTED QUARTS
(26 oz.)

Among the places who welcomed the most evacuees were Glamorgan in Wales and the county of Shropshire in the Midlands

Images: Getty Images

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS
DETTOL

ALL SMILES

With carnations threaded through their caps, these British soldiers gleefully pose for photographs outside a London Underground station in September 1939 shortly after Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. Part of the BEF, they are bound for the Franco-Belgian border.

Image: Getty Images

HOME GUARD

Beginning as veteran volunteers in Britain's darkest hour, the nation's defence forces grew to take on a range of dangerous and secretive roles

WORDS **ANDREW CHATTERTON**

Local Defence Volunteers in the Trent Valley use privately owned boats to defend the area's inland waterways from the seemingly imminent German invasion, May 1940

"They would have killed without compunction." This quotation is taken from Mr Bunting at War. Written in 1942, Robert Greenwood's novel describes the wartime experience of an 'ordinary' British civilian. It stems from a journey Mr Bunting has on a train where he is surrounded by people who have volunteered for various civilian organisations. A majority, though, are members of the Home Guard, who Bunting considers are "preparing grimly to defend things they had cherished all their lives and meant to stick to".

This represents the reality of the Home Guard, much more so than the BBC series *Dad's Army*, which too many people see as an accurate 'documentary' rather than the comedy it actually is. The Home Guard was not made up of ill-equipped 'Corporal Jones' types but well-armed men, many of whom had combat experience from WWI and were still in their 30s or 40s, with many others under 30 years of age in reserved occupations that were absolutely critical to the nation's war effort.

Their roles have also been misunderstood and underrepresented over the past 80 years, with many aspects almost completely forgotten. Even the origins of the Home Guard have largely been misunderstood. Before Churchill had got his feet under the table at 10 Downing Street, he was writing to the Lord Privy Seal Sir Samuel Hoare about creating a civilian defensive force, even using the term 'Home Guard'.

Just a month into the war, before the threat of invasion had raised its head, he wrote, "Why do we not form a Home Guard of half a million men over 40 (if they like to volunteer) and put all our elder stars at the head and in the structure of these new formations? Let these 500,000 men come along and push the young and active out of their home billets. If uniforms are lacking, a brassard would suffice, and I am assured there are plenty of rifles at any rate."

It was not just Churchill who was keen to see whether there was scope to organise a civilian defensive force. Sir Walter Kirke, who was Commander-in-Chief Home Forces between September 1939 and May 1940, ordered in March 1940 a review of the lessons learnt from the Volunteer Training Corps (VTC) – the WWI equivalent of the Home Guard.

The VTC was a relatively small force made up of just 350,000 (the number that Kirke thought would come forward in 1940). However, it wasn't until Churchill became prime minister in May 1940 that things got moving, and by the time of the famous radio announcement, Kirke was no longer in charge of the Home Forces.

It was the newly appointed secretary of state for war, Anthony Eden, who delivered the nationwide appeal. In his address on 14 May 1940, Eden explained, "…in order to leave nothing to chance and to supplement, from sources as yet untapped, the means of defence already arranged, we are going to ask you to help us, in a manner which I know will be welcome to thousands of you.

"Since the war began the government has received countless enquiries from all over the kingdom from men of all ages who are for one reason or another not at present engaged in military service, and who wish to do something for the defence of the country.

"Now is your opportunity. We want large numbers of such men in Great Britain who are British subjects, between the ages of 17 and 65, to come forward now and offer their service in order to make assurance doubly sure. The name of the new force which is now to be raised will be the Local Defence Volunteers [LDV]. This name, Local Defence Volunteers, describes its duties in three words. It must be understood that this is, so to speak, a spare-time job, so there will be no need for any volunteer to abandon his present occupation… Here then is the opportunity for which so many of you have been waiting."

The response to this appeal was frankly remarkable. Some listeners had left before Eden had finished the broadcast, making their way to the local police station where he had asked them to report and leave their names and details. Within 24 hours 250,000 LDV men had been enrolled; by the beginning of June 1940, the total number of volunteers had increased to at least 300,000, with no signs of slowing up. By the end of the next month, 1,456,000 volunteers had registered.

> *"The Home Guard was not made up of ill-equipped 'Corporal Jones' types but well-armed men, many of whom had combat experience from WWI"*

Local Defence Volunteer men, such as those shown here, were not required to leave their full-time occupations

The role of the Home Guard, initially at least, was more or less an observation one. Countering the threat from parachutists was considered the main task; to see them float down, quickly communicate location and numbers and, when appropriate and possible, to try and hold up their advance. They were also to hold key nodal points within their town or village (bridges, railway tracks, crossroads, etc). By slowing down the advance the aim was to allow the regular forces to recover and effectively counterattack. The Home Guard was never considered to be the last line of defence or the method by which the Germans were to be forced back into the sea, as is often perceived.

The effectiveness of the German paratroopers (Fallschirmjägers) had been demonstrated with the attack on the strategically important Belgian FortÉben-Émael. The positioning of the fort meant that its artillery emplacements dominated important bridges over the Albert Canal and could have caused chaos for the invading forces. Instead, Fallschirmjägers landed on top of the fort and took the defenders by surprise.

This threat, combined with the apparent actions of the 'Fifth Column', meant that strategically important sites such as waterworks, railways, factories and telephone exchanges across Britain needed specific Home Guard units defending them. These sites were to be defended by those who worked in them (meaning that their location and equipment knowledge would be particularly effective), thereby allowing regular troops to be freed up for general defence.

> *"Eden's appeal hit the willing ears of many of the male population, and the response, frankly, was remarkable"*

Organisation units

One example of such an organisation unit was the No. 4 Platoon (part of the 52nd Surrey (Surbiton) Battalion), which was "solely responsible for the ground defence of the [water] works" according to Paul Crook in his book *Surrey Home Guard*. The platoon was given strict instructions on how to deal with anything out of the ordinary they might see. These included "any attempt at unauthorised entry to the works, lights being shown, suspected signalling to obtain information. Any of the foregoing had to be reported to the Police and to the Metropolitan Water Board Battalion Headquarters, as well as No 16 Section Intelligence Corps."

Like water, the railways were a critical part of the country's infrastructure that needed guarding against a German invasion or enemy saboteurs. Southern Railway, for example, had a huge amount of property to protect. It had

Personnel from the Home Guard take part in a training exercise, c.1940 more than 35,000 steel bridges, 6,000-plus brick arches and viaducts, and over 3,220 route kilometres (2,000 miles) of track. Aside from these, 841 points of importance were also identified as needing some form of protection, including signal boxes, workshops, offices, depots and stations. This was clearly too much for the regular troops to protect and so the Southern Railway Home Guard sections had a critical role to play. They were keen, too: within a week of Eden's appeal 18,000 Southern Railway men had volunteered, and by stand-down in 1944 there had been 35,510 recruits.

Factories and other sensitive properties were also guarded. Harold Goodwin and Company Ltd in Warley, Worcestershire, was working with the Ministry of Aircraft Production during the war. Had the Germans reached the area, three men from the factory's Home Guard unit had been instructed to "immobilise all vehicles and battery charging, hiding vital parts and denying access to vital spares and tyres," Malcolm Atkin explains in his book *To the Last Man*.

The Air Defence Research and Development Establishment in Christchurch, Dorset, also had plans to carry out last-minute sabotage of the factory using the local Home Guard unit, as Atkin details. These measures included "…the destruction or removal of essential mechanisms to a hiding place, removal or destruction of war materials that the enemy might use; concealment of valuable records or destruction of them if copies were available elsewhere; cutting off gas and electricity supplies; immobilising transport; ensuring that any stocks of fuel did not fall into enemy hands; and removing or concealing any currency."

It is clear that the Home Guard's role had been greatly influenced by the Nazi blitzkrieg on mainland Europe and, perhaps against our perceptions of Britain particularly in 1940, lessons had been quickly learnt.

Men from the London and North Eastern Railway LDV group pictured in July 1940

One of these was the important role petrol stations played in ensuring that the Germans could continue their advance. In France, German tanks would simply stop at petrol stations, fill up and press on. To ensure that this did not happen in any invasion of Britain, some Home Guard units were specifically tasked to dismantle petrol stations as the Germans came through.

These Petrol Disruption Squads were formed throughout the country. Importantly, they were not to destroy the petrol stations, but rather dismantle them and hide the key parts to deny the invading Germans easy access to vital fuel. Then, as the British counterattacked, the Home Guard units could replace the previously hidden parts to allow British tanks to fill up and take the fight back to the Germans. The 7th Battalion of the Hertfordshire Home Guard recorded their role: "The immobilisation of petrol pumps at night by dealers was compulsory, and LDV units were responsible for seeing that the instructions were carried out." Captain Alan Brock, 7th Hertfordshire Battalion Home Guard, wrote in his history of the battalion, "They were also warned that they might also be called upon to assist military units in the destruction of petrol stocks in an emergency."

These are certainly not the ill-equipped, muddling old men that have for so long dominated our perception of the Home Guard. Not only were there expert squads guarding key infrastructure, but other, sometimes secret groups that would have acted as guerrilla fighters, much like the Auxiliary Units, men willing to do anything to defend their country.

Wintringham and Osterley Park

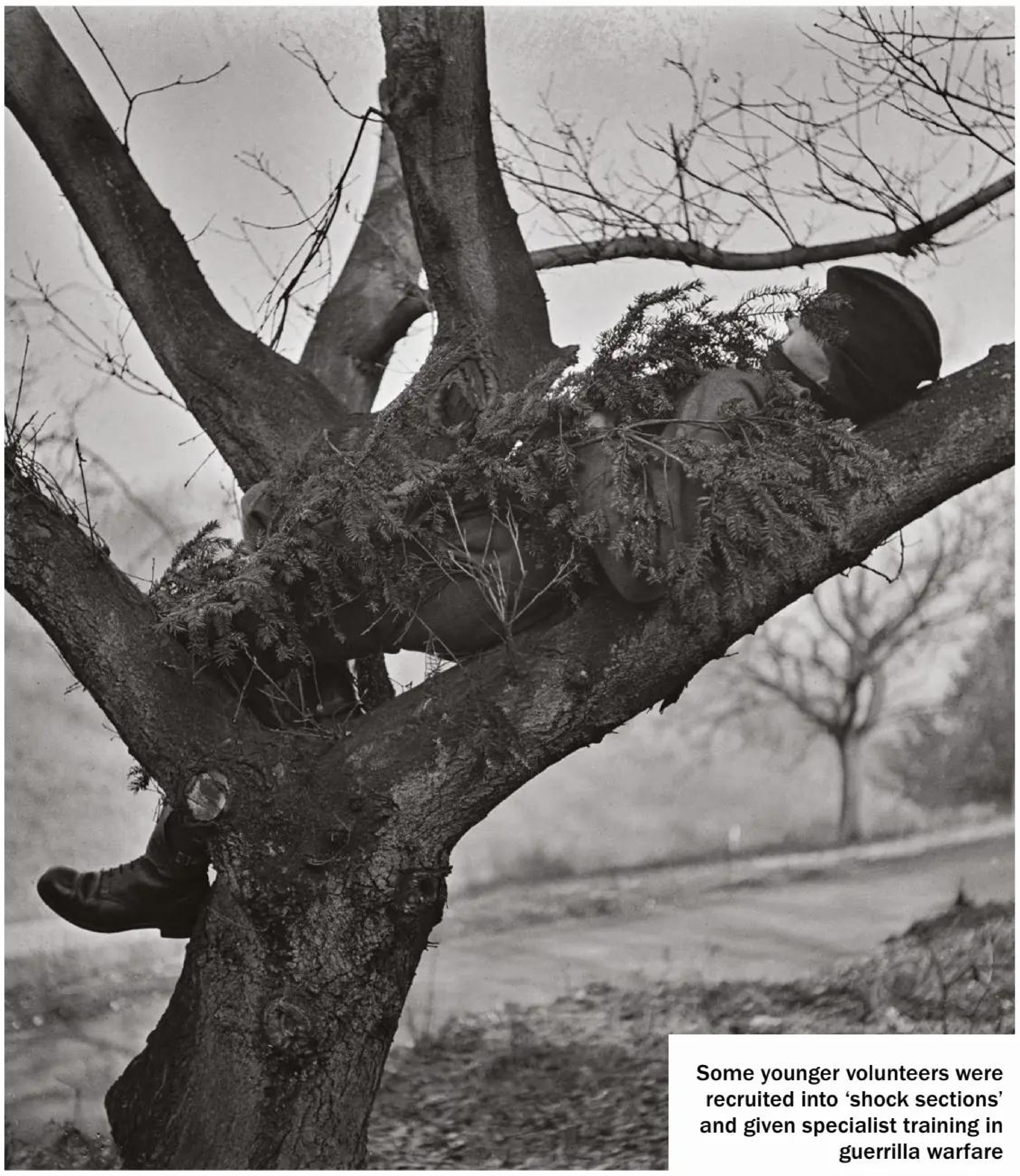
The role of the Auxiliary Units has over the past decade become more publicised. Highly trained, highly secret patrols of civilian volunteers would have, for a short period after the Germans entered their particular area, caused chaos to hold up the enemy advance.

These men with their suicide missions, secret bunkers and ruthlessness have become 'headline grabbers' as their secret roles become better known. However, the fact that the Home Guard had an equivalent force within its ranks has been somewhat lost in the noise surrounding Colonel Gubbins and his secret defensive force.

Part of the story of these groups starts before war had been declared. Tom Wintringham had in April 1939 called for 12 divisions of volunteers from the ranks of ex-servicemen and those too young to be called up. Wintringham had been a part of the British Battalion of the International Brigades fighting the fascists during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). His experience during this horrific conflict gave him an advantage over many in the military establishment. With Hitler and Mussolini supporting a fellow far-right potential dictator in Franco, Wintringham had fought against the kind of men and machines the defenders of Britain would be facing if the Germans invaded. He knew the levels of ruthlessness needed and that many of the traditional methods of fighting a war were no longer effective.

His passion for teaching the reality of modern war and the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare in particular led him to start a battle school at Osterley Park in West London, opening on 10 July 1940. He invited members of the newly formed LDV to attend and learn the lessons of the brutal Spanish Civil War. It also helped to

Many members of the Home Guard worked in reserved occupations that were crucial to the war effort, such as coal mining



Some younger volunteers were recruited into 'shock sections' and given specialist training in guerrilla warfare

address some of the frustrations around a lack of arms and training that were already building up within the ranks of the volunteer force.

However, Wintringham and his Osterley team's left-wing leanings meant that the battle school was not destined to run for long. Five thousand men came through its doors between July and October 1940, learning the 'dark arts' that Wintringham considered crucial for defeating any German invasion of Britain. With mistrust of communists still running high (at this stage of the war the Soviet Union was allied with Nazi Germany) Wintringham and his team were incorporated into the War Office's 'mainstream' training, which naturally took away the edge from the drills. It did, however, highlight to Home Guard commanders the potential effectiveness of guerrilla sections.

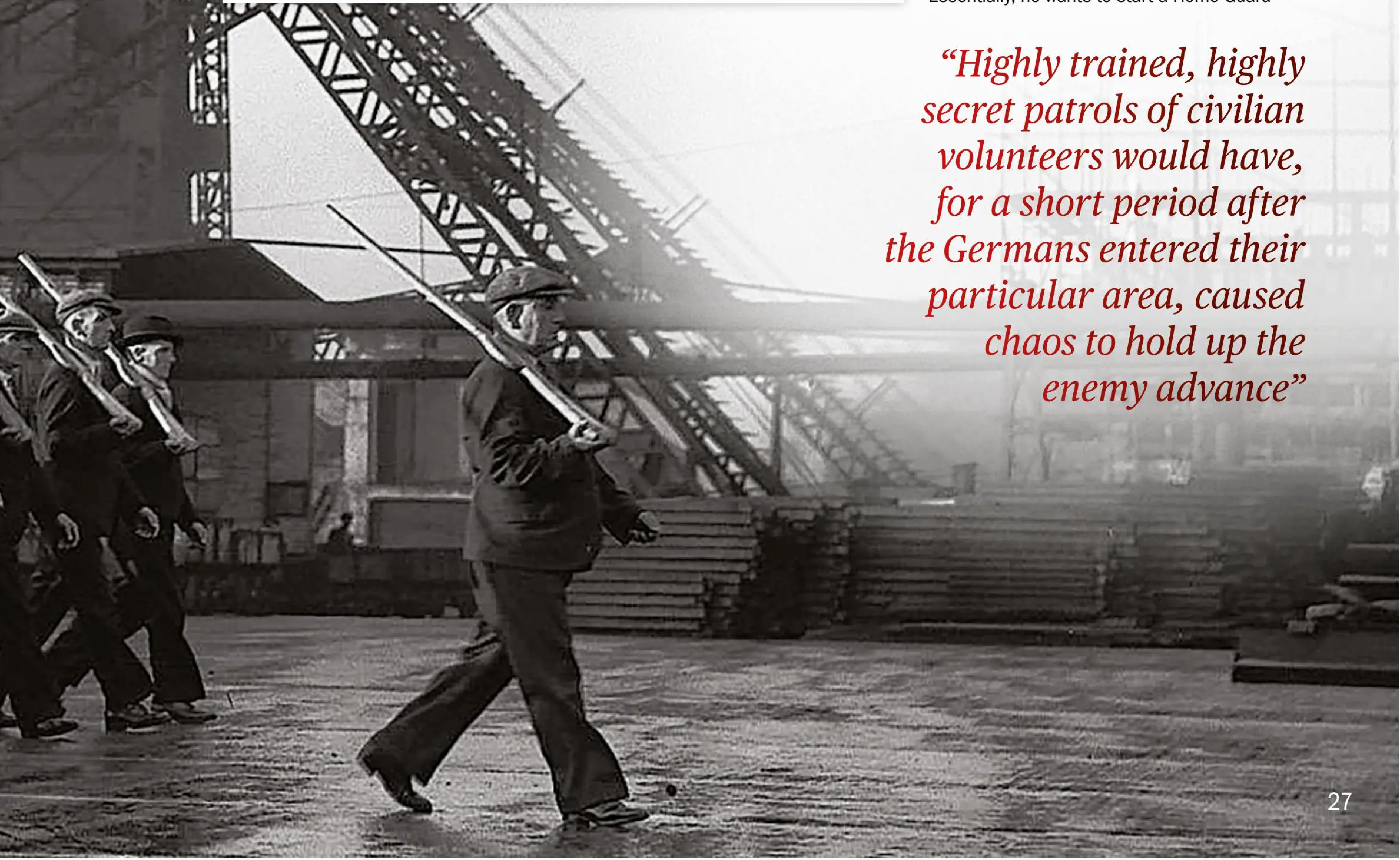
Wintringham's political affiliation also meant that he was unable to join the Home Guard 'proper', and he died shortly after the war aged 51. However, he had a substantial impact on the way many in the Home Guard reconsidered the potential of the force.

Home Guard guerrillas

Wintringham's influence can even be seen in one of the main factors that has done so much to negatively impact the reputation of the Home Guard since the end of the war – *Dad's Army*.

In an episode named 'Brain vs Brawn', Colonel Pritchard talks to Captain Mainwaring, Corporal Jones and Private Walker about a new scheme the training major is setting up involving the younger, fitter men of the Home Guard. Essentially, he wants to start a Home Guard

> *"Highly trained, highly secret patrols of civilian volunteers would have, for a short period after the Germans entered their particular area, caused chaos to hold up the enemy advance"*



commando unit to search for and destroy petrol dumps. Walker explains that they'd sent Pike for an interview to secure a place in the new group, but unfortunately he couldn't find HQ!

As we've discussed, *Dad's Army* is not a documentary, but this hint at an 'alternative' Home Guard highlights that these volunteers were perhaps more complicated than the general perception. It also hints at the fact that Jimmy Perry, the creator of *Dad's Army* (and co-writer of its Ivor Novello Award-winning theme tune) had been in such a 'commando unit' in West Hertfordshire.

Unlike the Auxiliary Units, which were very siloed patrols, some Home Guard guerrilla groups were openly affiliated with their local battalions. Others, however, did have a veil of secrecy over them. For example, in Leicestershire, Allan Hopcroft worked as a wages clerk at a factory that made webbing side-packs, straps and backpacks for the regular forces, which was considered a reserved occupation. In 1940, he immediately joined up with his local LDV unit in Quorn. After a few months he was approached by a mysterious Lieutenant Whitford, who was contacting the younger members of the local units. Hopcroft recalled that Whitford told him,"'We don't want to spread it around, but we are looking for some young, active men.' He did not tell us what it was about until we got into it. He said he wanted to form a 'shock section' in dirty tricks. They wanted a silent section if the Jerries [Germans] had come. We'd have gone about in civilian clothes to raise havoc."

> *"He was trained to fit explosives around the A417 bridge over the River Severn at Maisemore, west of Gloucester, and if necessary, blow it up"*

This seems very similar to the experience Perry re-created in the *Dad's Army* episode. Whitford began to train his young recruits, and during this training (unlike the Auxiliary Units during this period) Hopcroft and his colleagues continued to wear Home Guard uniforms with the only distinguishing feature being the fact they wore knives in their belts.

Richard "Dick" Whitford had been in the Merchant Navy during WWI, but between the wars had found himself in Palestine as part of the Palestine Police Force. It was during his time there that he learnt the dirty tricks he was now passing on to his young Home Guard recruits. It was not just in Quorn that these guerrilla sections were being put through their paces though. Historian Austin J. Ruddy has found evidence of other such Home Guard 'shock sections' around Leicestershire, including Ullesthorpe, Claybrooke, Ashby Parva and Dunton. This suggests that Leicestershire was a hotbed for such groups, but it could also point to Home Guard guerrillas (separate from the Auxiliary Units) being in action across the country, and there is increasing evidence that this was the case.

Jim Bick was born in 1911 and by the start of WWII was working on a farm in Gloucestershire in a reserved occupation. He joined the LDV immediately after Eden's appeal, but only at the end of his life did he begin to talk about the actual role he would have undertaken if the Germans invaded. He told his son that he had a highly secret role in a group linked to but separate from the Home Guard. He was trained to fit explosives around the A417 bridge over the River Severn at Maisemore, west of Gloucester,

KEEP LEFT
TO LORRY DRIVERS IN CASE OF AIR RAID WARNING ASSEMBLE HERE.

Home Guard men at the Wolseley Motors factory in Birmingham parade through the works gate, July 1940

A Lewis gun team from the Post Office Home Guard practises battle drill, fire discipline and weapon handling, 1943

and if necessary, blow it up. He also mentioned that there was a large set of weapons and explosives stored at a barn on the farm at which he worked. All of this sounds almost identical to the role and tactics of the Auxiliary Units, except that no such units were operating in that part of the country. As a serving member of the Home Guard it seems that Bick was in fact part of a Home Guard guerrilla/sabotage section.

In Bedfordshire, George Manning admitted to his family that he belonged to a subsection of the Home Guard. He worked at Igranic Electric in Bedford, and as this was a reserved occupation he joined No. 2 Platoon, Bedford Home Guard. However, it was in the 1950s that his family began to get the impression that there had been more to Manning's role than guarding nodal points. One of his sons remembered, "We were walking in the open country to the south of Mile Road, Bedford, and along a stream bank on the edge of Elstow Moor, when my father told us to wait for a moment and he would show us something. He picked up a solid stick from a hedgerow and began scrapping the earth behind some bushes near to the stream. He had to try the same near other bushes before finding a metal ring covered by bushes. With some effort and much clearing of earth, he eventually raised a trapdoor and descended down a steel ladder into an underground chamber.

"I well remember his words when he got to the bottom of the ladder: 'Good God – everything is still here – I must get onto the army and have all this stuff removed straight away.' He would not let us go down in case some of the explosives were dangerous."

This bunker sounds very similar to the operational bases utilised by the Auxiliary Units, but again with no such units operating in Bedfordshire, it seems that Manning and some of his Home Guard colleagues belonged to a guerrilla section.

Another remarkable Home Guard guerrilla bunker story comes from Leeds, again an area where the Auxiliary Units were not operating. Harker Brown told his family after the war that he was not 'just' in the Home Guard but in a separate section that was to disable locomotive factories in the area, putting them out of action before the Germans could get hold of them.

This is very similar to the factory units we have already discussed. However, Harker's group was based in a small underground room where food, weapons and ammunition were being stored. To gain access one had to climb through a rabbit's hutch! Again, the disguise and thinking around the bunker is very similar to the Auxiliary Units, but because of his location, Harker instead must have belonged to a Home Guard guerrilla section.

We know that leading members of the Auxiliary Units were getting a little nervous about the number of Home Guard guerrilla units being set up in their areas (mainly coastal counties), and the archives have copies of letters sent demanding that in counties where the Auxiliary Units existed, no Home Guard guerrillas could operate. There were fears that they could impede the Auxiliary Units in their operations or could accidentally cause a security leak if they happened across an Auxiliary Unit patrol. So we tend to find Home Guard guerrilla sections inland or on the west coast where no Auxiliary Units were operating.

It is also likely that throughout the war, as senior members of the Auxiliary Units left and joined regular commands across the country, they too put into place unofficial Auxiliary Unit-like groups within the Home Guard structure.

Dad's Army has had a double-edged-sword effect on the Home Guard. For a group that was never called upon to serve in direct action against an invading force, the sitcom has allowed it to remain in the nation's consciousness. However, its depiction of a group of mainly elderly men who, although undoubtedly brave, would have had little impact on the German invaders has meant that many aspects of the Home Guard's actual and sometimes secretive role have been forgotten or ignored.

As Mr Bunting thought, these men were defending their families and a land that they had known all their lives. They would have fought with ruthlessness in their villages, towns, factories and strategically important points. They would have put petrol stations out of action to slow down the advance, and with the Auxiliary Units hitting the supply chain, this would've had a critical impact. Some, mainly younger, members of the Home Guard would have emerged from bunkers to launch assaults against the invading force in a guerrilla role, a role that has not been recognised for the past 80 years or so.

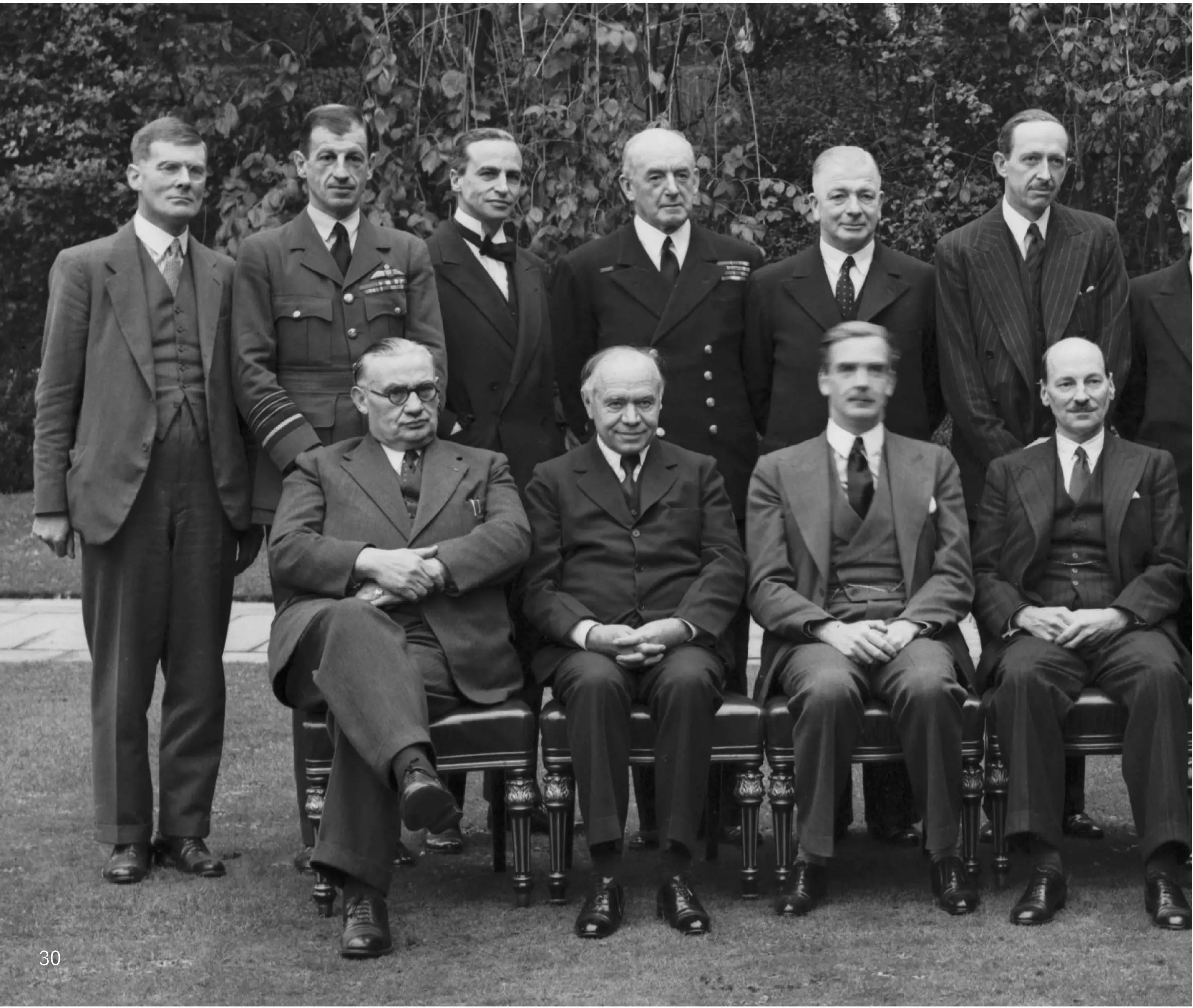
We need to see the Home Guard within the wider defensive picture. They were not isolated, under-armed, useless old men but an experienced and much younger group that would have played an important role within the overall defensive strategy. While they would not have been able to ultimately repel a full-scale invasion, they would have done everything within their power to protect their nation.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

A CABINET IN CRISIS

With the threat of a German invasion looming, Churchill had to win the war within his own government before he could confront the Nazis

WORDS **NIKOLE ROBINSON**



Norway and Denmark had fallen to German occupation, and the British Government was in uproar. The defensive campaign waged in Norwegian waters in April 1940 had been nothing short of a disaster, with tactical errors and a lack of proper strategy leaving the nation and its naval forces feeling the sting of defeat. And despite being one of its leading architects as First Lord of the Admiralty, it was Winston Churchill who gained the most in the aftermath. Blame was placed on Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who was pressured by the opposition into a debate to discuss Britain's shortcomings in the ongoing war effort. This led to what is perhaps the most significant discussion in parliamentary history, taking place over two days on 7 and 8 May 1940.

Clement Attlee, leader of the opposition and head of the Labour Party, was Chamberlain's harshest critic. After what many considered a weak opening statement by the prime minister, in which he attempted to defend the actions of his government, Attlee put forward that Norway had merely been the latest in a series of weak decisions, voicing his dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war at large. He condemned Chamberlain's history of appeasement and lack of initiative, lamenting that Chamberlain had not adequately prepared for war and had been overly optimistic in his approach. As well as damning attacks from the opposition, Chamberlain also faced criticism from members of his own party, several of whom echoed Attlee's opinion that he had been complacent in letting Hitler get this far.

"As well as damning attacks from the opposition, Chamberlain also faced criticism from members of his own party"

It became increasingly clear that faith in Chamberlain as a wartime leader had been lost. After a final defensive speech by Churchill, the Norway Debate culminated in a vote of no confidence against the prime minister. Despite

Winston Churchill pictured with his wartime cabinet in 1941

> *"His confidence rattled, Chamberlain concluded that a national coalition of all parties would be best for Britain"*

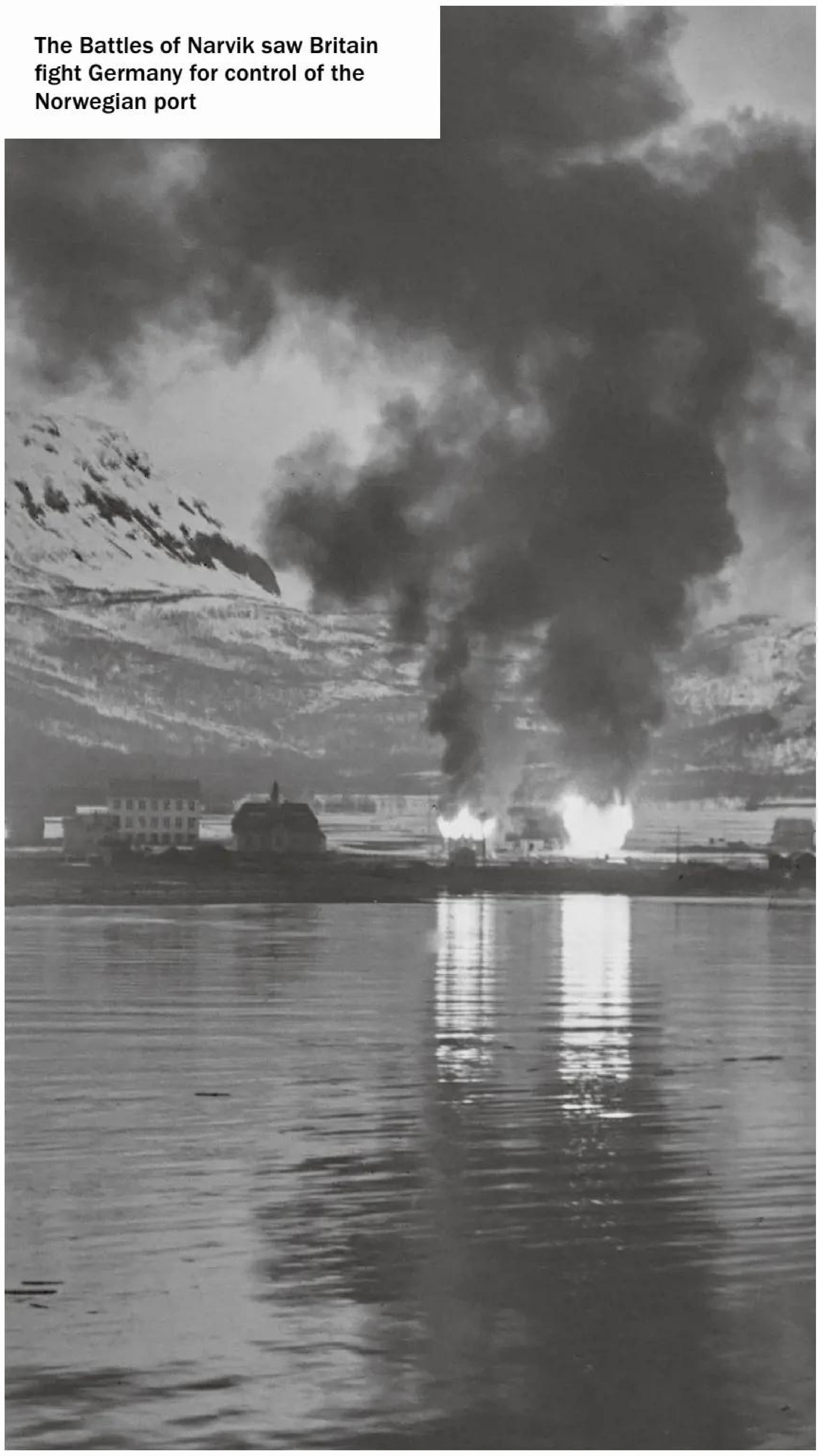
a winning result of 281 votes to 200, this made evident the widening rift within the Conservative Party, their majority falling to just 81. Prominent members had voted against their leader, while many more had abstained – even some of his most loyal supporters had turned against him. His confidence rattled, Chamberlain concluded that a national coalition of all parties would be best for Britain, but he was aware that Labour wouldn't serve under a prime minister they felt was weak, especially after seeing internal support for him falter.

When his suspicions that Labour would refuse to join a national government headed by him were confirmed, Chamberlain made the weighty decision to step down. With the right to suggest a successor, he felt there were only two choices: Churchill, who had survived the Norway debacle with little blame placed on his shoulders, and current Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax. Popular within the Conservative Party and a friend of King George VI, as well as having a close working relationship with Chamberlain, Halifax was the obvious frontrunner. However, at a meeting on 9 May, he was hesitant to accept. He claimed that his position in the House of Lords would interfere with his duties and that perhaps Churchill would be better suited to lead the nation during wartime. When Churchill was called into a meeting at 10 Downing Street later that same day, he readily accepted the role of leading Britain.

King George was less certain when Chamberlain went to him with his selection. Halifax would have been his ideal candidate, and Churchill was still disliked by the royal family after his support of the king's brother, Edward, when he abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson. Knowing that the future of the country was on the line, he decided to put his distrust in Churchill aside and named him the new prime minister of a national coalition government. The two would go on to form an unlikely friendship as they met each week to discuss the war over lunch, with Churchill eventually gaining the king's full support.

On 10 May, the day of Churchill's appointment as prime minister, Hitler made his next move, invading Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands on his march into France. In this trial by fire, Churchill wasted no time, meeting with Attlee and his second-in-command, Arthur Greenwood, to appoint them to his war ministry, with the Labour Party leaders given the titles of lord privy seal and minister without portfolio respectively. Despite being handed the task of leading the country, Churchill was in a unique position, as Chamberlain remained head of the Conservative Party. To ensure continued support from his peers, Churchill was obligated to offer the ousted prime minister a place in his cabinet, much to Attlee's chagrin.

Churchill proposed that Chamberlain fill the roles of leader of the House of Commons and



The Battles of Narvik saw Britain fight Germany for control of the Norwegian port

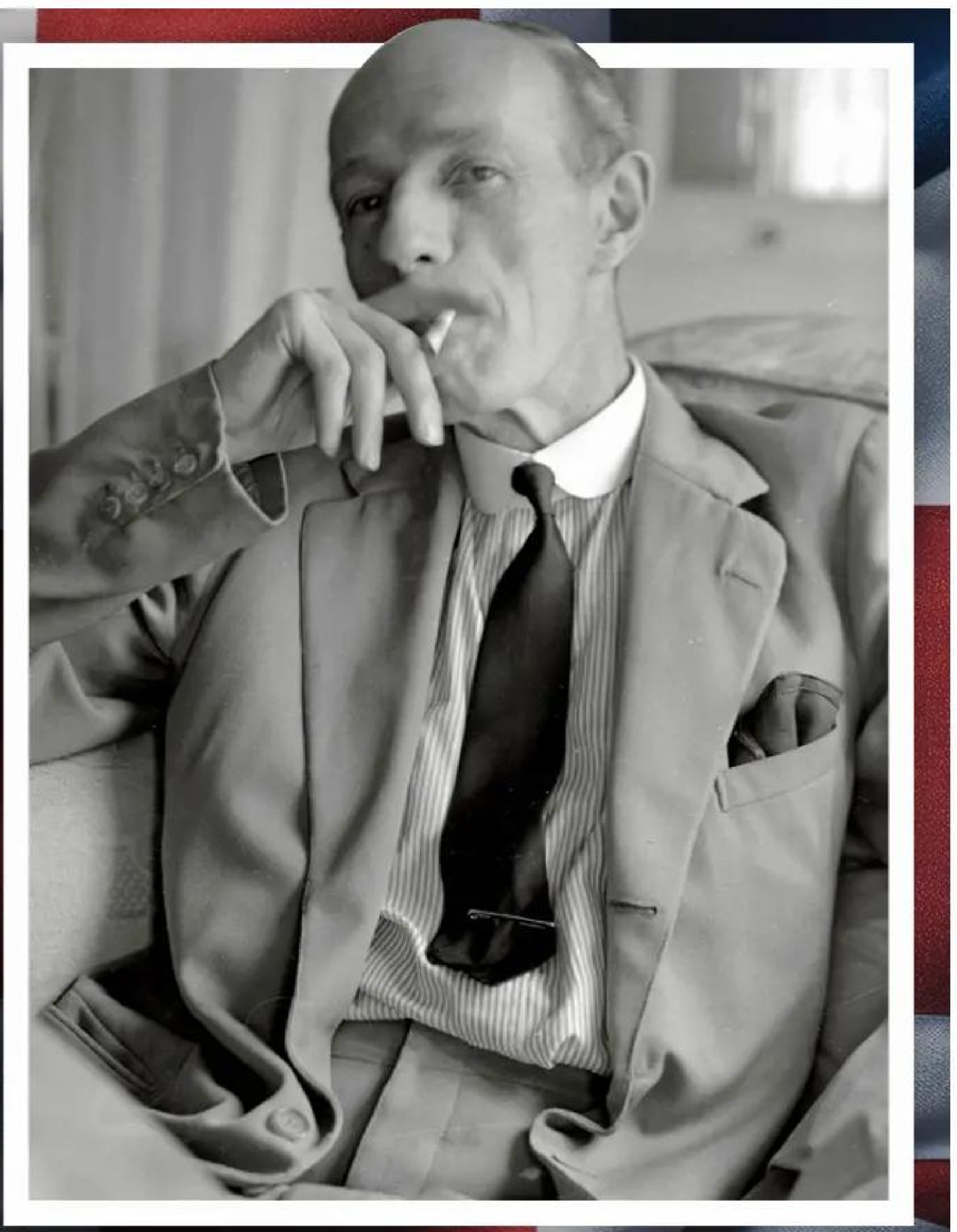
Edward Frederick Lindley Wood

THE FIRST EARL OF HALIFAX WAS A DIPLOMAT AT HEART

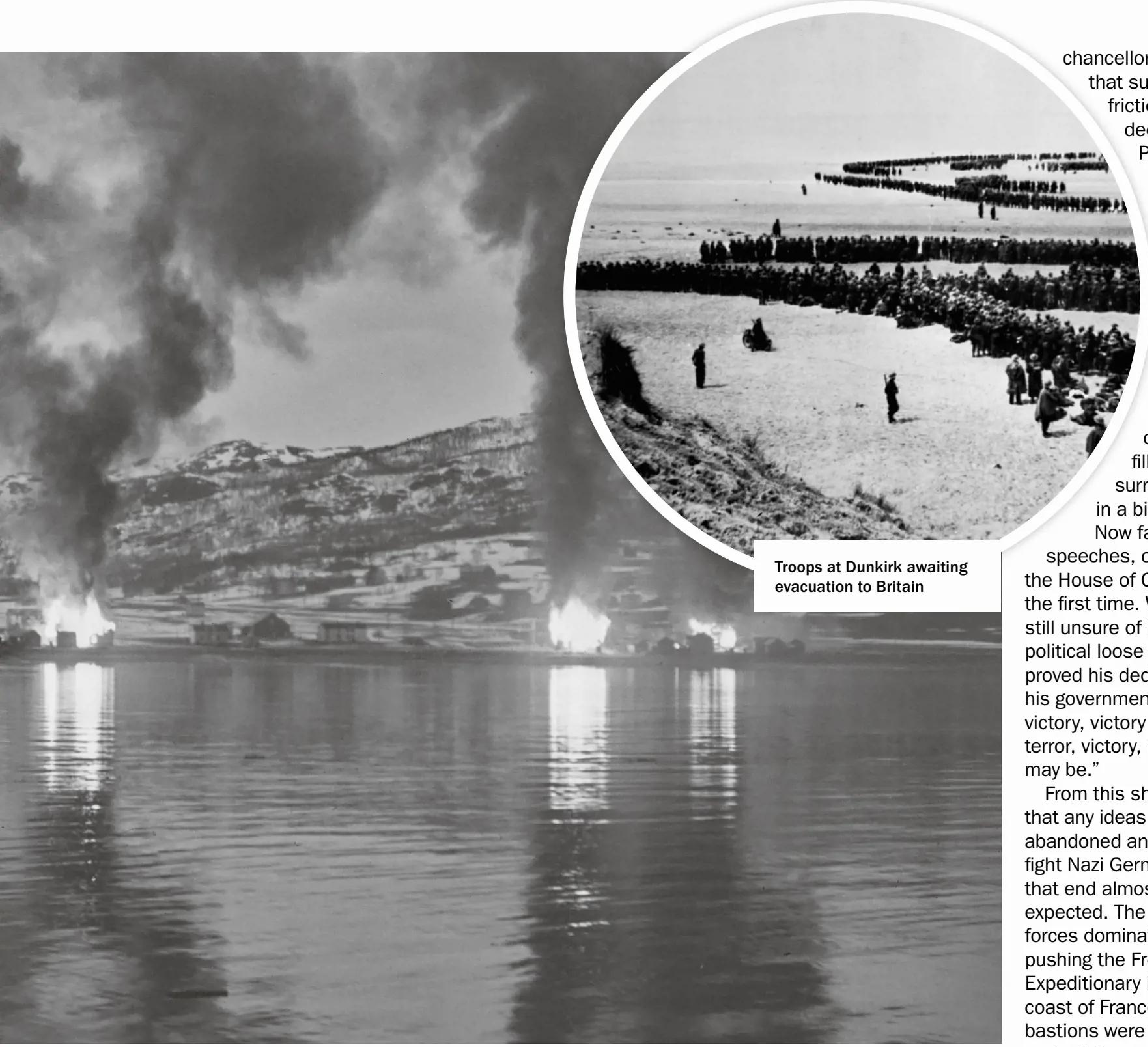
Eton and Oxford educated, Lord Halifax first stood for election in 1910 as a member of the Conservative Party, winning the constituency of Ripon, Yorkshire, by 1,000 votes in January of that year. Halifax served as an MP until his ascension to the House of Lords in 1925 – despite being the fourth son, this became his birthright at the age of nine, as his three older brothers had all passed away. Between 1921 and 1924, Halifax held various positions in government, including under-secretary for the colonies, president of the Board of Education and minister of agriculture.

With King George VI's blessing, Halifax was appointed viceroy of India in 1925 – a tumultuous time that saw the rise of Indian nationalism – where he worked closely with Gandhi to broker peace and understanding between Britain and its then colony. Returning home in 1931, he reluctantly returned to the Board of Education before becoming secretary of state for war in 1935. Later that year, he also gained the positions of lord privy seal and leader of the House of Lords.

Chamberlain appointed Halifax foreign secretary in February 1938 after Anthony Eden resigned over disagreements with the prime minister's policy of appeasement – the very same matter that would mar the relationship between Halifax and Churchill. After seven months in his post under Churchill, he was reassigned and became the British ambassador to the United States, where he formed a strong working relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt.



A father to five children, Lord Halifax died on 23 December 1959 at the age of 78



Troops at Dunkirk awaiting evacuation to Britain

chancellor of the exchequer, but conscious that such an appointment would cause friction with Labour, Chamberlain declined and was instead made Lord President of the Council.

The fifth member of Churchill's ministry was Halifax, who continued as foreign secretary. Churchill appointed himself leader of the House of Commons and bestowed upon himself a newly created role, minister of defence, allowing him to chair the Cabinet Defence Committee and have a direct line to his military commanders. With the cabinet filled by 11 May, Churchill had surrounded himself with former rivals in a bid to create a united front.

Now famous for his rousing wartime speeches, on 13 May, Churchill addressed the House of Commons as prime minister for the first time. While many in Parliament were still unsure of him due to his reputation as a political loose cannon, this powerful speech proved his dedication to the nation and made his government's position on the war clear: "It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be."

From this short speech, it was understood that any ideas of appeasement had been abandoned and that Churchill's intent was to fight Nazi Germany until the bitter end. However, that end almost came much sooner than expected. The next two weeks saw German forces dominate France and the Low Countries, pushing the French Army and the British Expeditionary Force back towards the northern coast of France. By 25 May, the only remaining bastions were the ports of Calais and Dunkirk, and a full evacuation of British and Allied troops was looking like the only option left. Churchill was hard at work putting together an escape plan that would come to be known as Operation Dynamo, sacrificing Calais to use Dunkirk as an exit point to bring his men home to fight another day. Churchill maintained that even if France were to fall, Britain would fight on, but this depended heavily on how many soldiers could be saved from the shores of France.

Meanwhile, the diplomatic Halifax was pursuing other options. A suggestion had come from France that U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt could be persuaded to broker a deal with Benito Mussolini – though they were then unaware of the Italian's distaste for the American leader. Italy had thus far remained out of the war, despite a pact with Germany, and the Allies were desperate to keep it that way.

On 25 May, Halifax met with Giuseppe Bastianini, the Italian ambassador to London, to see if Mussolini might be willing to mediate peace in Europe as an ally to Hitler. Bastianini gave the impression that this could be orchestrated but hinted that Britain might have to give up some of its territories – such as Malta and Gibraltar – to sway Mussolini.

When Halifax came to the war cabinet the following day to discuss opening a line to

Churchill and Lord Halifax in Whitehall, London

The cabinet war rooms, where Churchill made his wartime broadcasts

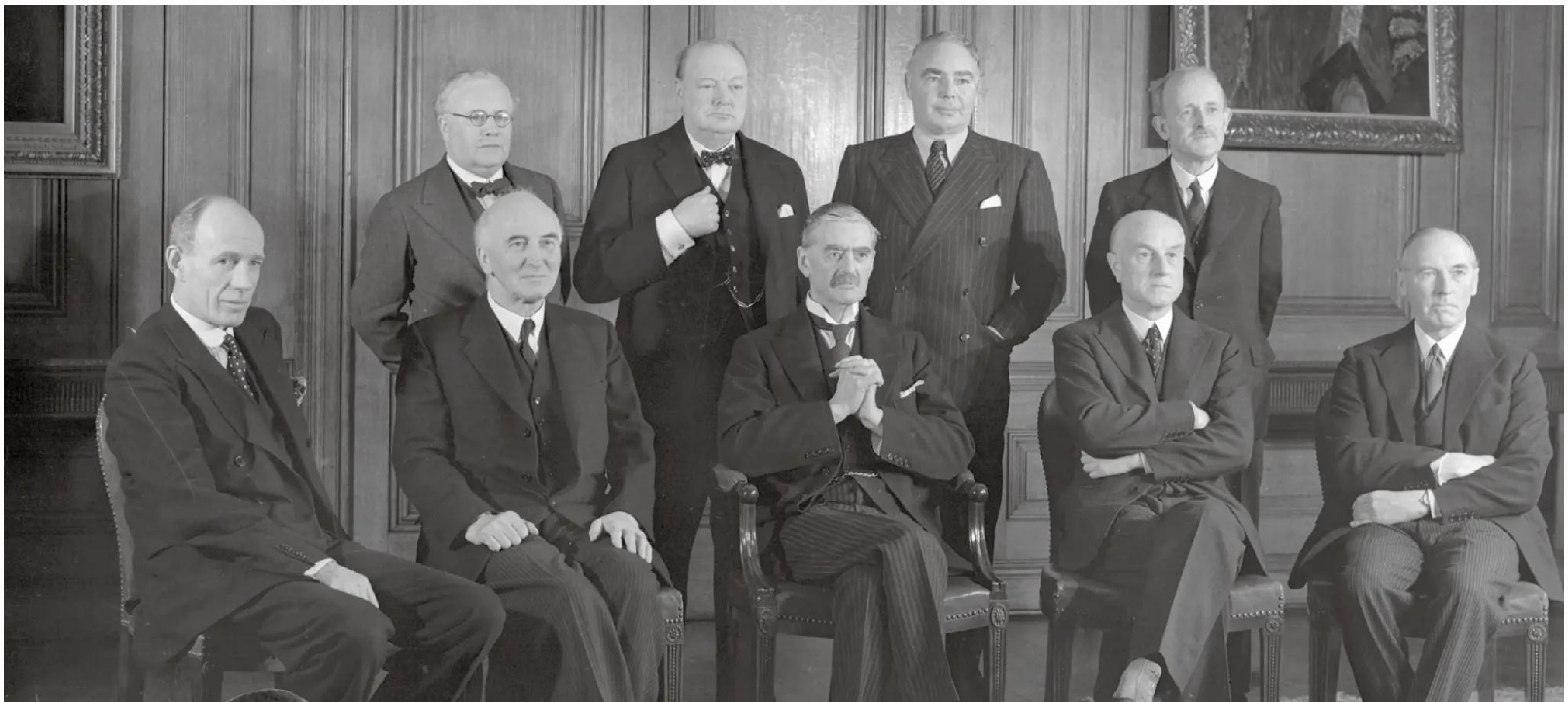
Addressing the nation on 13 May 1940, Churchill gave a rousing speech that called for "victory at all costs"

Mussolini to see what the terms of a peace deal might be, Churchill had little interest. While this could spare the island nation from invasion, he said, it would do nothing about Hitler's domination over Europe. Halifax staunchly defended his proposal, stating that the complete defeat of Germany was now looking impossible with the army in retreat to Dunkirk and the fall of France imminent, and that the most important thing was ensuring the continued independence of the British Empire. Churchill argued that any negotiations would show weakness, and Britain and France needed to continue fighting no matter how bleak things looked.

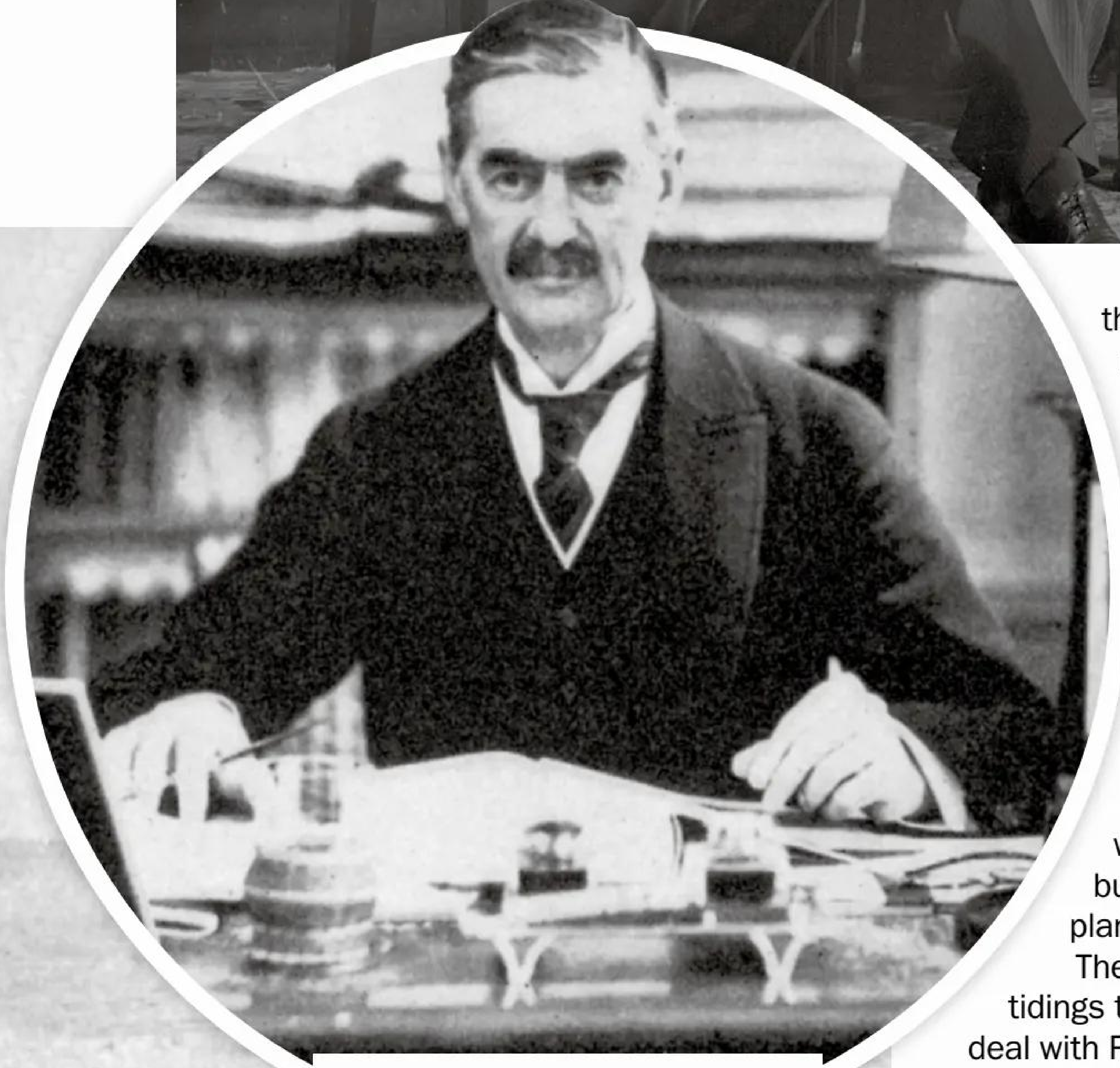
The two men were at odds and tensions were running high. Attlee and Greenwood were in support of fighting on, while Chamberlain was difficult to read, though he did express he had little trust in Mussolini. Churchill feared being opposed by the two Conservative members of his cabinet due to their influence within the party, and thus could not outright refuse Halifax, even if he detested this Italian gambit. What the cabinet could agree on was that as soon as France was defeated, Italy would likely enter the war on the winning side, potentially forcing France to arrange its own peace deal. Meeting with French Premier Paul Reynaud on 26 May, Churchill reiterated his defiant stance while seeking assurances that France also planned to stay in the war until there was no other option. This would also strengthen the two countries' positions in any negotiations with Italy should the need arise, somewhat placating Halifax.

With pressure mounting, Churchill announced that no decisions should be made until British troops had been evacuated from Dunkirk, giving the go-ahead for Operation Dynamo. Nevertheless, Halifax was instructed to write a draft of communication to Italy, which was brought to the cabinet on 27 May in a meeting

Operation Dynamo, which utilised civilian craft to save soldiers stranded in Dunkirk, proved a massive win for Churchill



The war cabinet in November 1939 under Chamberlain's leadership



Chamberlain was ousted as prime minister but continued to work closely with Churchill until terminal bowel cancer forced him to retire

that saw tensions between its members reach boiling point. Attlee argued that Mussolini would never be satisfied with any terms the Allies could offer, while Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Liberal Party, said entering negotiations would see the nation's morale wither as it would be considered defeatist. Chamberlain, meanwhile, saw no use in approaching Italy but also didn't want to upset the French. Churchill was now more firm in his rejection, but Halifax threatened to quit if his plan was dismissed entirely.

The morning of 28 May brought tidings that Mussolini had no desire to deal with Roosevelt, an option that had been favourable to the cabinet over a direct British-French approach. Churchill could no longer tiptoe around his disdain for Halifax's plan. Showing great resolve, he said he would not make concessions to Italy and that Britain should not fall with France. Surprisingly, Chamberlain had come to share his views, agreeing that more favourable terms might come in the future, but that there was no point in opening negotiations now. Halifax also stood firm, arguing that there would be no better leverage after France capitulated and German bombers turned their attention to Britain. He still had little faith in a British victory – something that was unacceptable to Churchill and was keeping them from seeing eye to eye. Halifax believed that there was no point in going down in a blaze of glory. But even if they were to eventually fall, Churchill surmised, it would still be better than surrender. Nations that went down fighting could rise again.

Even though it was now Halifax against the rest of the cabinet, Churchill feared his dismissal would send ripples through the government. Adjourning the tense meeting, he cleverly called together his outer cabinet, a group of 25 ministers not directly involved in the war effort but still key members of Parliament. To them he declared that Britain should continue the fight, that any negotiations would reduce the nation to a slave state, and that they would become Hitler's puppet. Their reaction was explosive, and Churchill now knew he had their full support.

When the war cabinet reconvened, he was filled with a renewed vigour, and Halifax knew he'd been outmanoeuvred. These 72 hours of intense debate changed the course of the war, and Britain would emerge from its 'darkest hour' with the will to wage war until the end.

> *"He still had little faith in a British victory - something that was unacceptable to Churchill and was keeping them from seeing eye to eye"*

Images: Getty Images, Shutterstock, Adobe Stock

ALONE IN THE DARKNESS

38 Little ships, great escape
In May 1940, the BEF needed a miracle to escape the clutches of the rampant Wehrmacht. A plucky fleet of civilian vessels would deliver it against the odds

46 Britain's secret army
Meet the lethal guerrillas trained to unleash hell should the Germans land on British shores

52 Defending Britain
Explore the elaborate coastal defences constructed to hamper an invasion

60 Channel Islands: Life under the Nazis
While they may never have conquered Britain, for almost five years the Nazis ruled Jersey and Guernsey

64 The dogfight begins
Determined to hold out to the last, the RAF fought valiantly to secure victory in the Battle of Britain

70 The women's auxiliary air force
It wasn't just the men who played their part in defending Britain's skies

Image: Getty Images

LITTLE SHIPS GREAT ESCAPE

How an armada of ferries, fishing boats and yachts captured the heart of a nation and transformed defeat into victory at Dunkirk

WORDS **BETH WYATT**

Britain was on the brink in spring 1940. The Nazi war machine had swept through Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg and was making gains in France fast. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and their French counterparts began a hasty retreat close to the coastal town of Dunkirk, where thousands would fight to the death to give their comrades the best chance of escape.

It seemed all was lost and the BEF consigned to total defeat, but they didn't count on the armada of the 'little ships': some 700 vessels that, along with the Royal Navy and backed up by the army and RAF, rescued more than 338,000 stranded soldiers.

The heroism of this motley crew of pleasure ships, fishing vessels, lifeboats and yachts, their brave captains repeating arduous journeys night after night, is enshrined in legend today and was a ray of hope for Britain's civilians as they stared into the abyss of a war that would consume the continent for five more years.

Christened Operation Dynamo, the mission was the brainchild of Vice-Admiral Bertram Ramsay, the Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief, Dover. He envisaged the rescue of 45,000 men, with Prime Minister Winston Churchill's estimate a more cautious 30,000. With sturdy armour, anti-aircraft weapons and a larger capacity to ship more soldiers at once, the navy's destroyers would seem the obvious fit for the rescue mission. But although these ships could move alongside Dunkirk's vast jetties (or 'moles') that led out to sea, they couldn't access the shallows of the beaches. This is where some civilian assistance was needed.

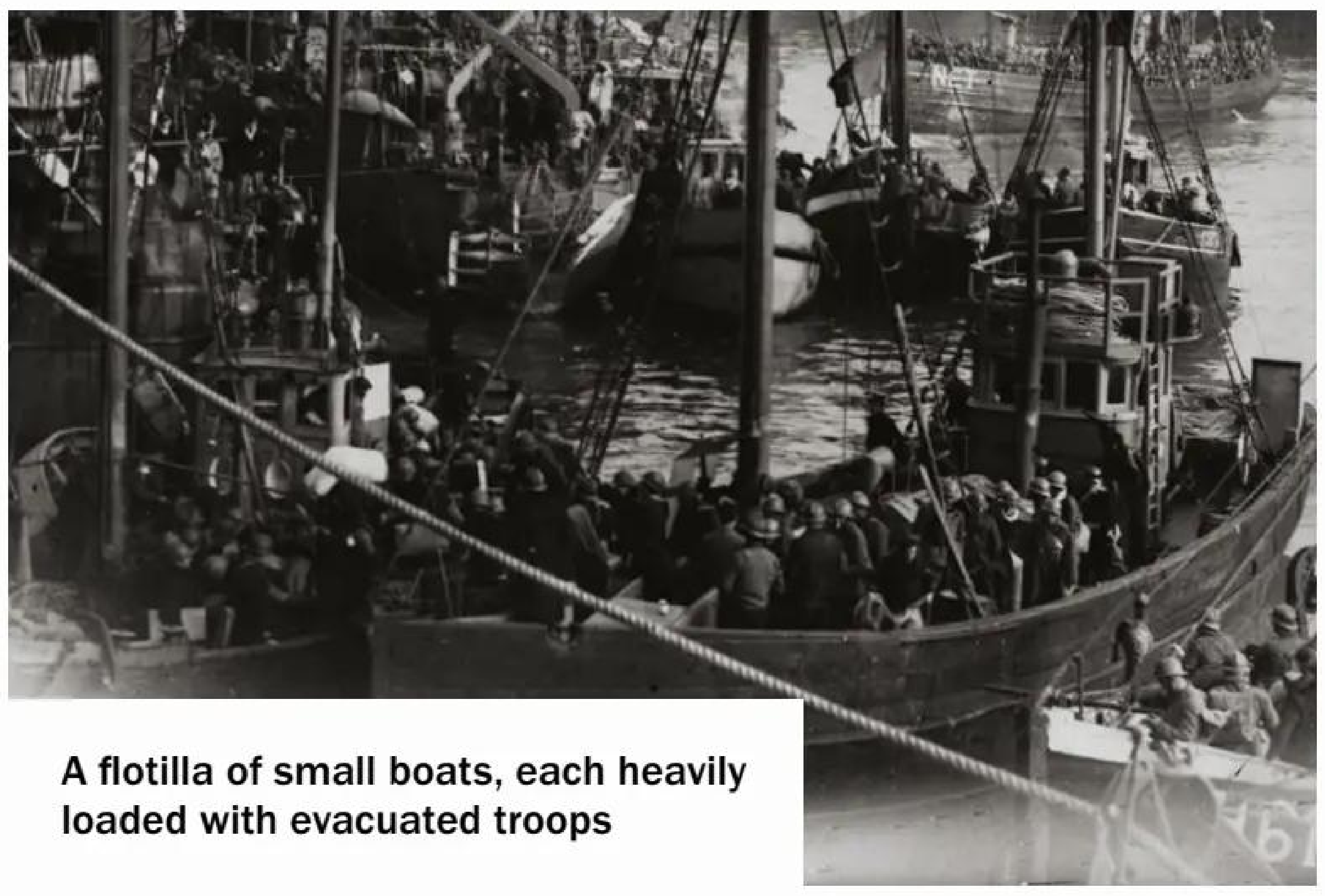
An urgent call was put out via the BBC and newspapers for as many vessel owners as possible to come forward, but the nature of the mission was shrouded in secrecy so many had no idea what they would face. Contrary to expectations, hundreds responded, offering private yachts, ferries, paddle steamers, hospital ships and barges, including the 15-metre (49-foot) *Count Dracula*, which had seen action with the Imperial German Navy during WWI.

Britain's people responded in true patriotic fashion, but the commanders were under no illusions about the challenges. "Nothing but a miracle can save the BEF now," were the grave words of General Alan Brooke.

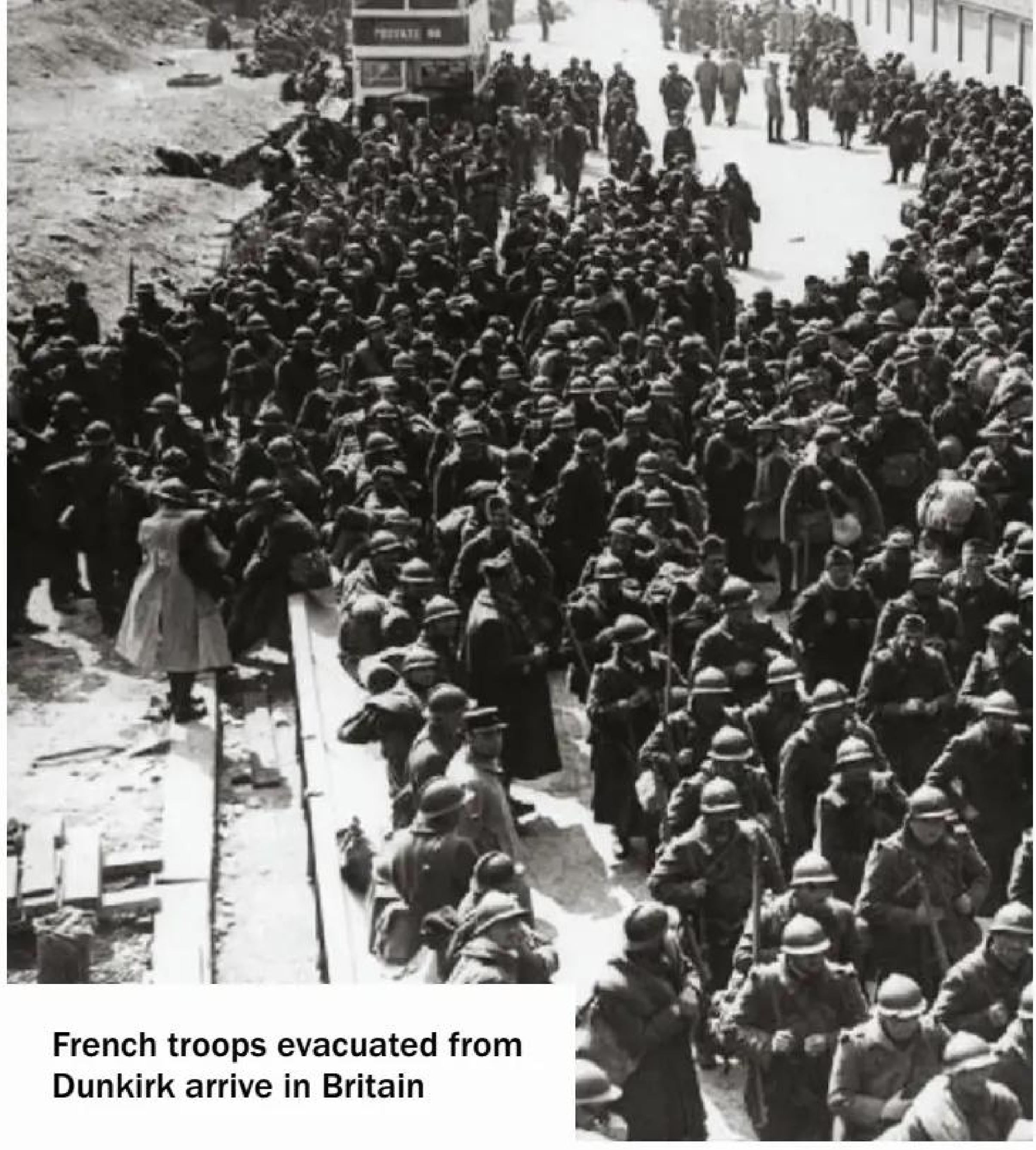
Embarking from Ramsgate in Kent, the little ships began their mission on 26 May, unknowing of the dangers ahead. Journalist Robert Harling, who went along on the initial voyage, was appreciating the marriage of the River Thames and the night sky when, upon leaving the estuary, the rising sun illuminated an odd sight.

"We were moving up the coast with a stranger miscellany of craft than was ever seen in the most hybrid amateur regatta," he wrote. "Destroyers, sloops, trawlers, motorboats, fishing boats, tugs, Dutch skoots. Under the splendid sun, they seemed like craft of peace journeying upon a gay occasion but suddenly, we knew where we were, for someone said: 'There they are, the bastards.'"

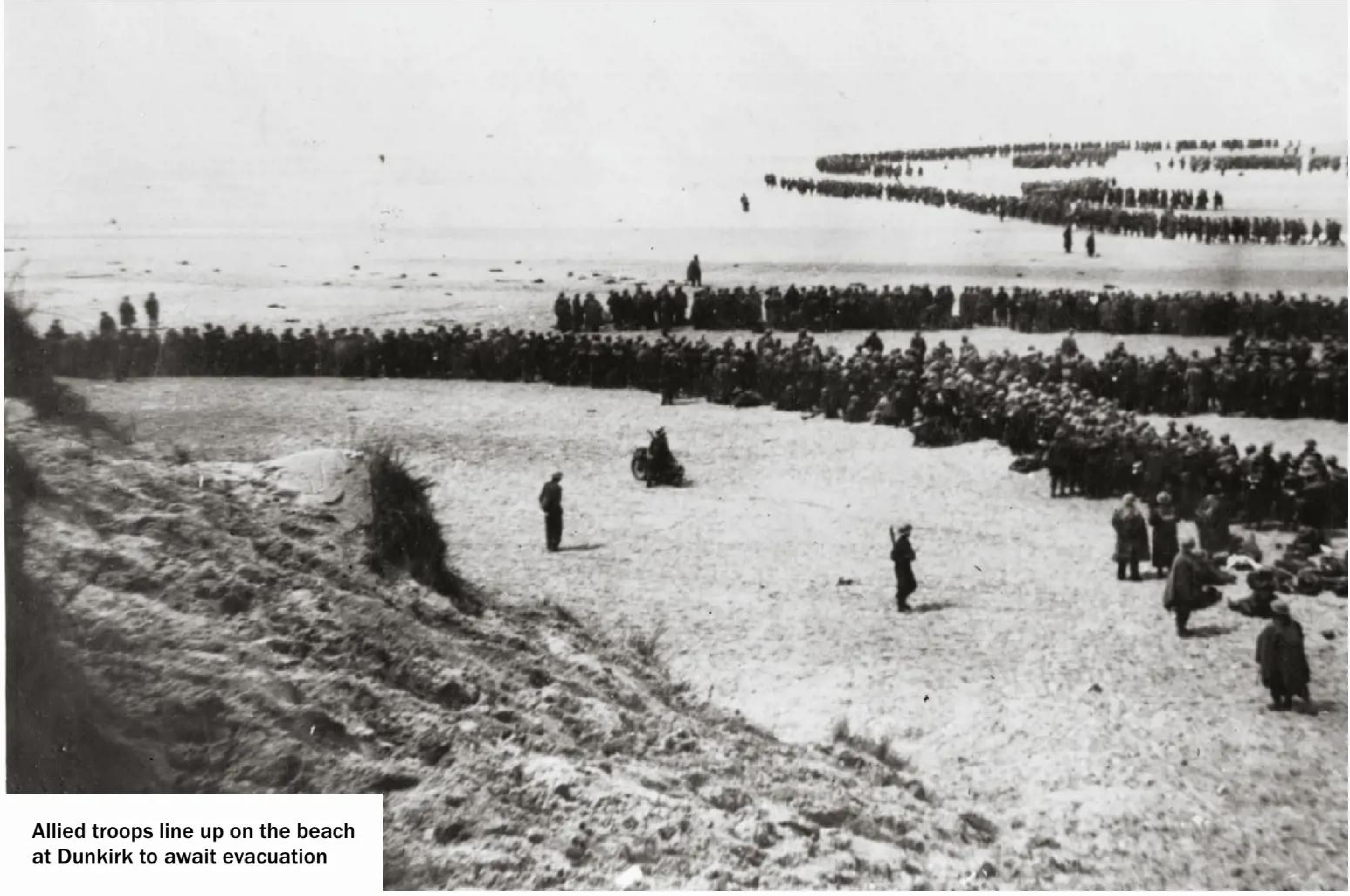
This tranquil picture was not a lasting reality for the boats, which encountered perils like mines and the Goodwin Sands on their way to Dunkirk. Then, at the harbour, there would be the unceasing fear of the Stuka dive bombers.



A flotilla of small boats, each heavily loaded with evacuated troops



French troops evacuated from Dunkirk arrive in Britain



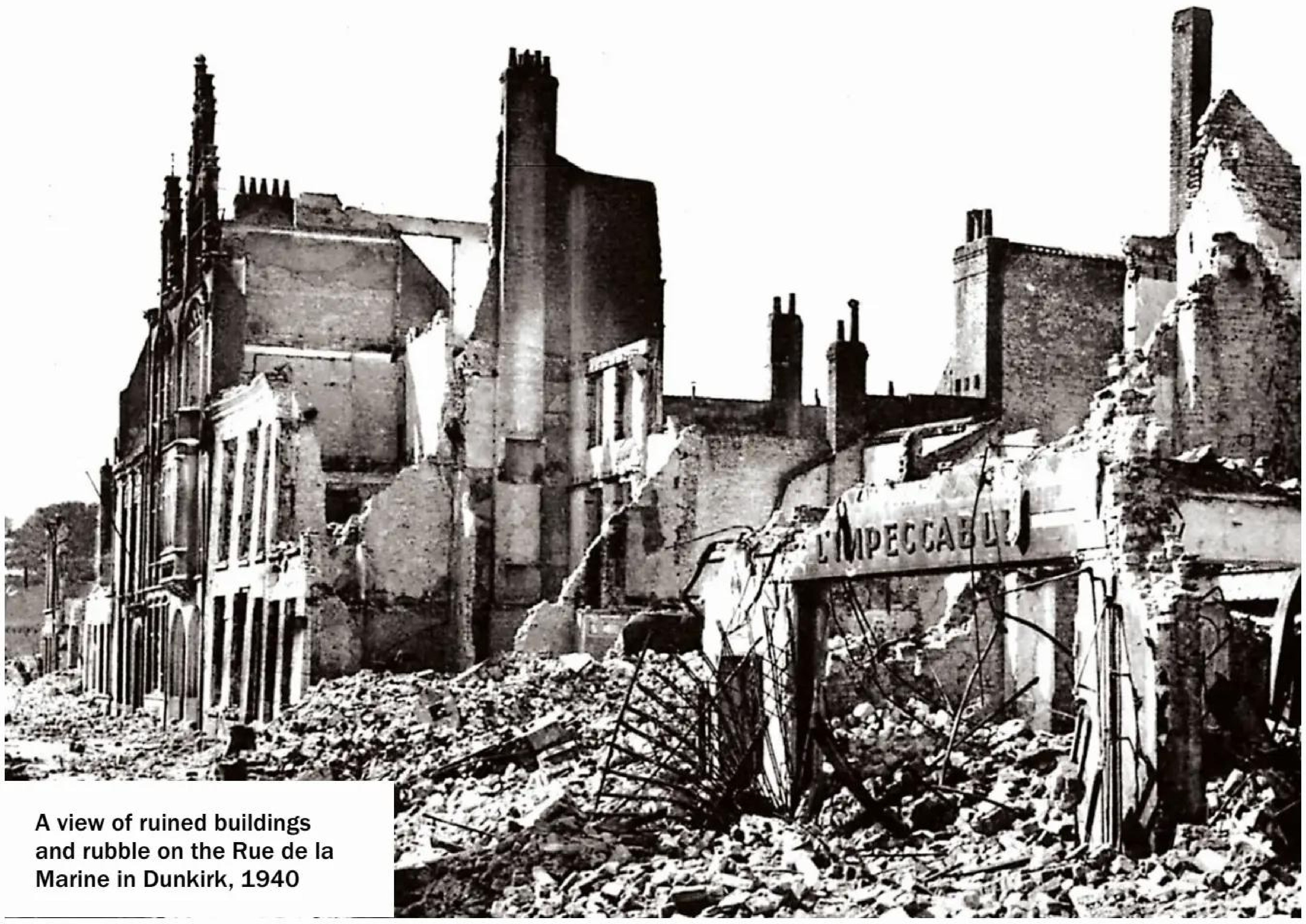
Allied troops line up on the beach at Dunkirk to await evacuation

> *"When we got near the coast and you could hear the banging and the crashing and the screaming - bodies and bits floating in the sea - well, I was sick as a bloody dog"*

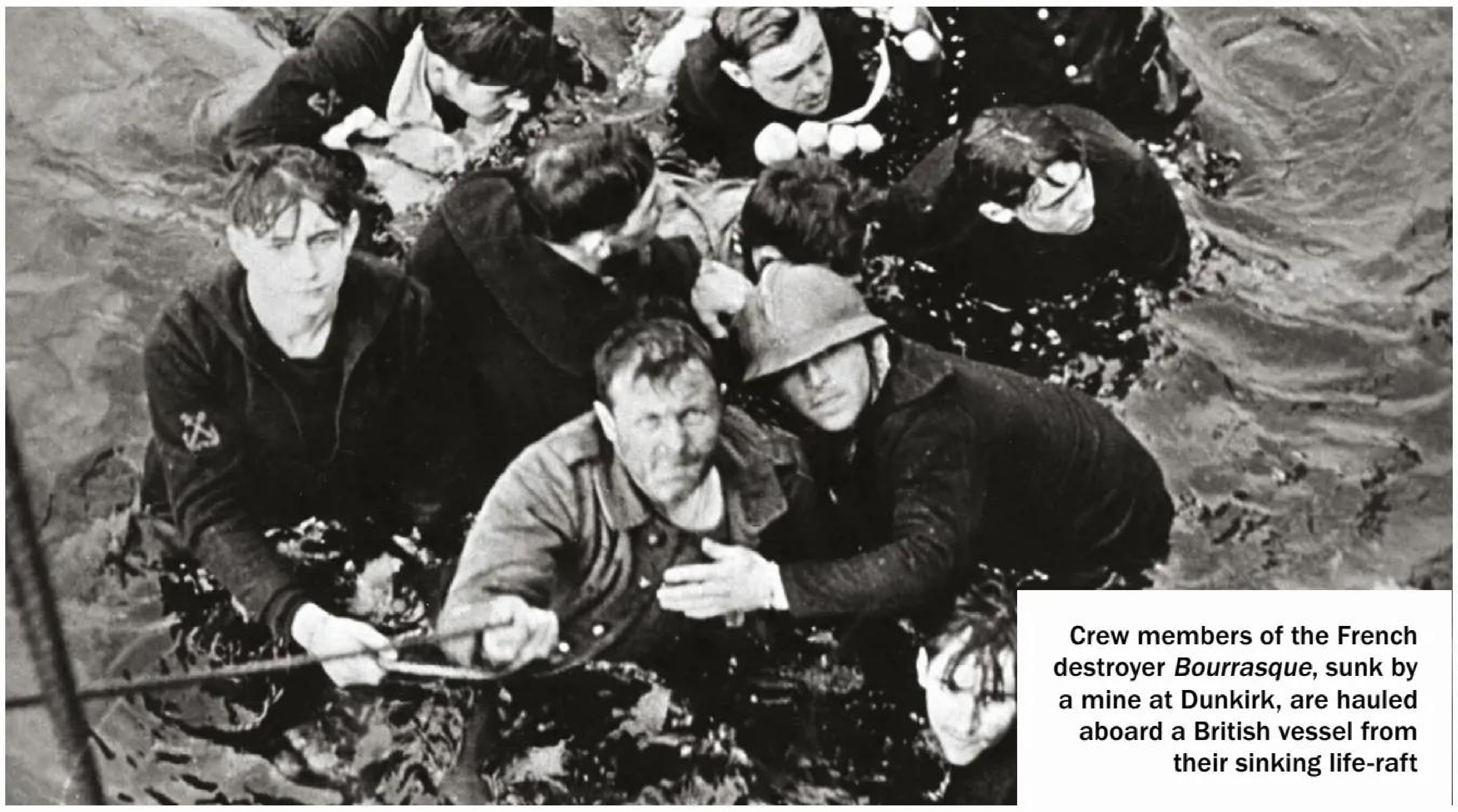
The first little ship to traverse the course was the Isle of Man steamer *Mona's Isle*, which set sail from Dover at 9 p.m. She arrived at Dunkirk shortly after midnight and picked up 1,429 men – but the risks became clear as she sailed towards England.

Having already been assailed by German artillery, *Mona's Isle* was machine-gunned by fighters on its way back to Dover. Petty Officer L. B. Kearley-Pope was shot multiple times, but despite his injuries he courageously fired back at the German fighter planes and continued the journey, arriving at the port at about noon on 27 May (he would later be award the Distinguished Service Medal). Many of the crew were not so lucky, with 23 killed and 60 wounded.

Still, other little ships went forth to Dunkirk, where they witnessed thousands of exhausted soldiers lining the moles and wading in the shallows, easy pickings for the bombers. Fifteen-year-old sea cadet Reg Vine was one of the youngest rescuers present. "We had just been told we were evacuating some troops. That was all. Just evacuation of British troops," the veteran said in an interview with journalist and



A view of ruined buildings and rubble on the Rue de la Marine in Dunkirk, 1940



Crew members of the French destroyer *Bourrasque*, sunk by a mine at Dunkirk, are hauled aboard a British vessel from their sinking life-raft

author Sinclair McKay. “I was told on the way there, ‘You look after one lifeboat when you get there and Paddy will look after the other one.’

“Right-o, I thought, lifeboats. When we got near the coast and you could hear the banging and the crashing and the screaming… and God knows what – bodies and bits floating in the sea – well, I was as sick as a bloody dog.

“When I was a kid, I had been taken to a slaughterhouse by an uncle who showed me the killed pigs and bullocks and cut them all up. I saw bits and pieces like that. So now our captain said to me, ‘Just pretend you are back in your uncle’s shop and they’re animals. They’re not human beings. And they might unsettle your stomach, so have a drop of this.’”

As the first troops came home, there was much curiosity from civilians. “People living in houses beside the railways in some southern suburbs of London have been watching a stream of troop trains bringing men back,” reported *The Times of London* on 30 May 1940. “Many of the trains are made up of dining cars. Through the windows, tired-out soldiers, some with several days’ growth of beard, can be seen sprawling fast asleep, their heads on the dining tables.”

Exhaustion was setting in for the crews of the little ships, but still they carried on. However, for some they would come to a tragic end. The paddle steamer *Waverley* had begun its return to England with 600 soldiers when it took a fatal hit. The crew of a nearby destroyer sprung into action, rescuing 200 men from the water, but the remaining 400 perished – weakened by hunger and fatigue, they were no match for the strong currents.

Another paddle steamer, *Crested Eagle*, shared a similarly bleak fate. Its engine room was struck and flames engulfed it off the coast of Zuydcoote, some miles northeast of Dunkirk. Those able to escape into the sea were picked off by German machine-gunners in low-flying aircraft. All 300 soldiers on board lost their lives. Leading seaman Vic Viner’s older brother, Albert, had been rescued from the destroyer *Grenade* after it was attacked, but in a cruel twist of fate, his saviour was the soon-to-be-stricken *Crested Eagle.*

“She [the boat] was dive-bombed by 12 bombers, as she was going out towards the open sea, she was bombed,” he told McKay. “Everyone involved was burned to death.” Vic

The spirit of Dunkirk

SOCIAL HISTORIAN HENRY BUCKTON SAYS THAT DUNKIRK HAS BEEN WOVEN INTO THE BRITISH IDENTITY, BUT EXPERTS VIEW IT DIFFERENTLY

How have historians’ perspectives on the evacuations changed?
Dunkirk is perhaps unique because it has been written and spoken about in the same exalted company as Agincourt, Waterloo and the Normandy Landings for decades. However, it was, of course, a defeat. Yes, it was a logistical victory and did wonders for public morale, but militarily it was a disaster. I think today the perspective in the eyes of the public has changed to appreciate this point; historians have largely always understood it.

Why were Allied forces so badly beaten in France that they had to retreat?
The Germans launched a new type of warfare: it was fast-paced and direct and took the Allies by complete surprise. They were digging in expecting a long, drawn-out campaign similar to the trenches of WWI, but the Nazis had other ideas.

How would you describe the impact of the little ships fleet?
Immense! This was a remarkable and typically British response to a disaster that very few other nations would even have contemplated. It is doubtful that the Royal Navy would have been able to rescue the vast numbers achieved without the help of the little ships. Time would have been against them and many more Allied soldiers would have been left behind and taken prisoner.

How did the public react to the evacuations?
Most people in Britain knew absolutely nothing of what was occurring – in fact, they believed the army to be invincible – so when word got around Bristol that they were bringing soldiers back, people were confused. Women and children in their droves went down to Stapleton Road station to cheer them on and wave flags. The sight that met their eyes was not at all what they had expected: train after train unloading men that were dirty, unshaven and desperately tired. Some were on crutches, others wearing dirty, blood-stained bandages.

What affect did Dunkirk have on the rest of the war?
In reality, it probably had very little impact militarily. Even if the BEF had surrendered, Britain would have remained free and was able to build new armies and in time provide a training ground for the armies of America and Canada as well as a springboard from which to launch the reconquest of occupied Europe in 1944.

Why does Dunkirk still resonate so strongly with Brits today?
Probably because the very word ‘Dunkirk’ has become part of Britain’s identity and DNA. It is used to describe perceived traits of the British character like defiance, bravery, stoicism, all pulling together to overcome adversity: the so-called Dunkirk spirit.

Henry Buckton’s book *Retreat: Dunkirk and the Evacuation of Western Europe* is available online

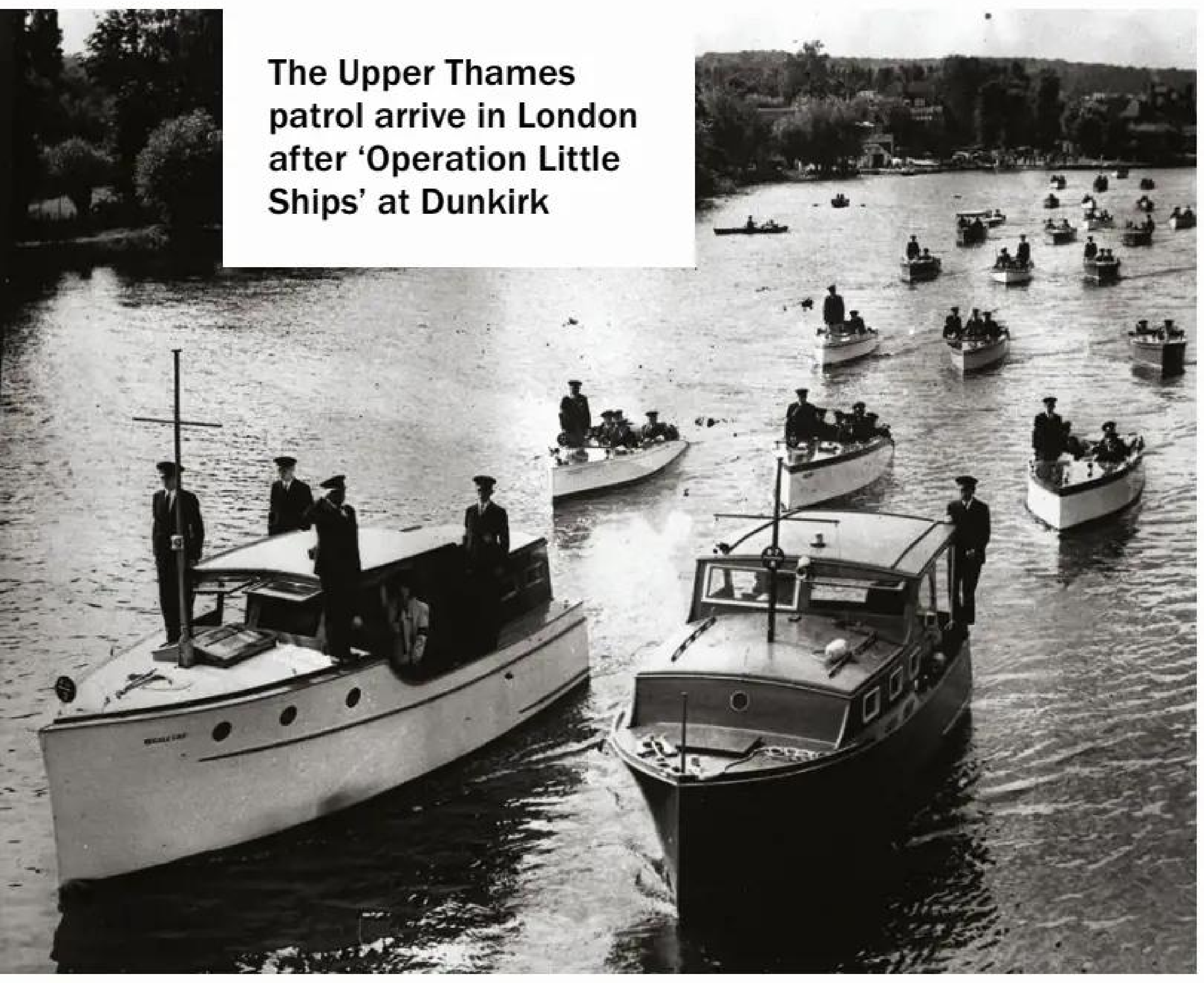
died aged 99 in 2016, the longest-surviving 'beach master' of Dunkirk.

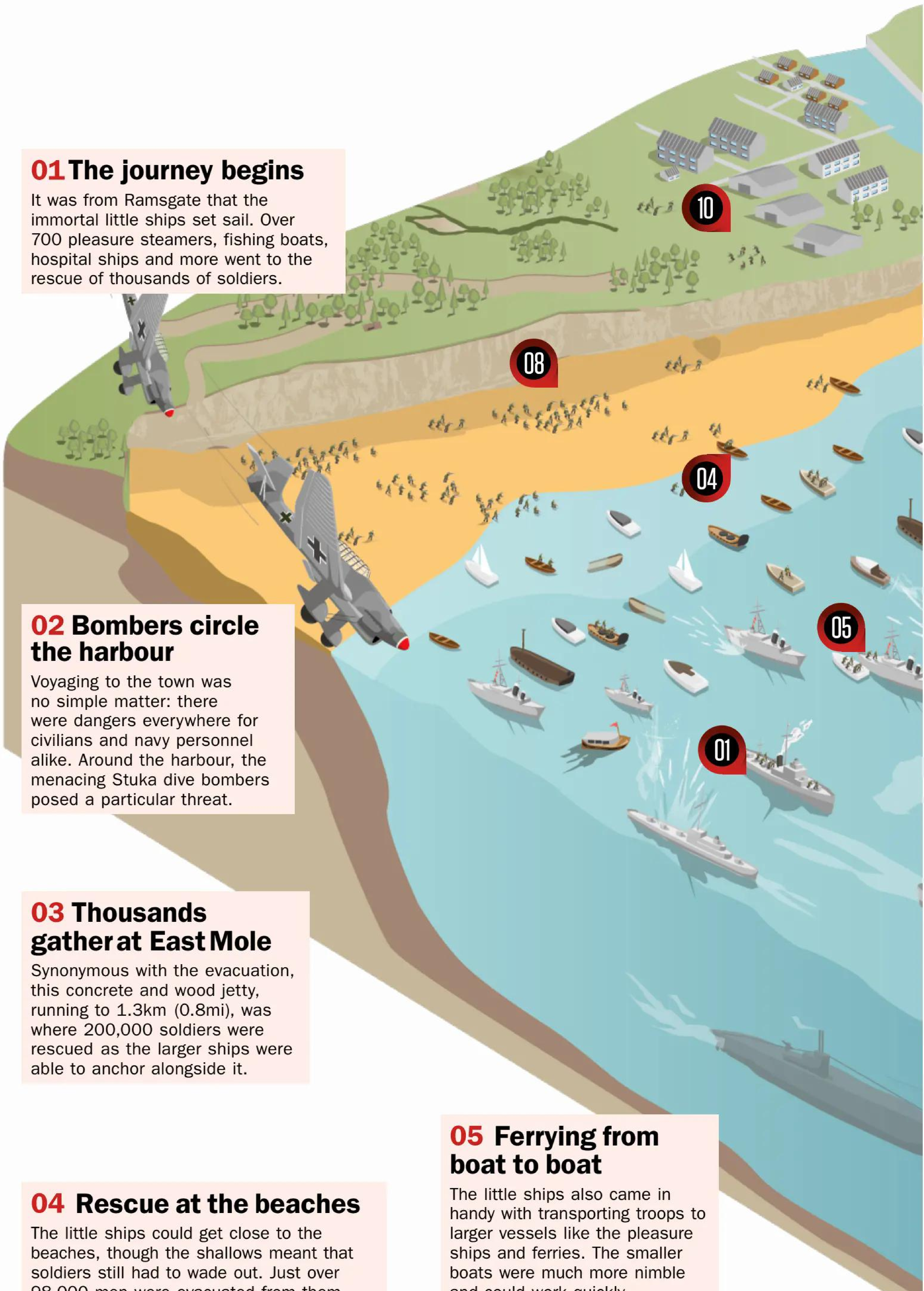
The *Gracie Fields*, which had rescued 280 soldiers on the first day, was struck on the next while trying to save another 750. A shell blew up its engine room, but, unlike the Waverley and Crested Eagle, the ailing vessel's soldiers were rescued by another boat.

Other paddle steamers were fortunate to get away. HMS *Medway Queen* evacuated 7,000 men in seven trips, while Mersey ferry *Royal Daffodil* sailed 9,500 soldiers to safety across the same number of runs, surviving bomb, machine gun and torpedo attacks.

Cockle boats of the Thames Estuary also took up the call, with Vice-Admiral Ramsay describing their conduct as "exemplary". Leigh-on-Sea's prolific Osborne family put forward six of their cockle boats, each saving approximately 1,000 soldiers. But on the return journey, one of their number, the *Renown*, hit a mine and was destroyed, with the crew – Frank and Leslie Osborne, Harry Noakes and Harold Graham Porter – losing their lives. Frank and Leslie were two grandsons of Osborne Bros founder, Thomas George Osborne.

Another Osborne, 19-year-old Eric, and his cousin Horace, had taken charge of *Resolute*. When they arrived at the blazing town, the tide was too far out for them so they sailed over to the harbour. Drawing alongside the pier, they encountered a group of soldiers who weren't best pleased at the thought of voyaging home in the cockle boat. But Eric and Horace climbed


The Upper Thames patrol arrive in London after 'Operation Little Ships' at Dunkirk



01 The journey begins

It was from Ramsgate that the immortal little ships set sail. Over 700 pleasure steamers, fishing boats, hospital ships and more went to the rescue of thousands of soldiers.

02 Bombers circle the harbour

Voyaging to the town was no simple matter: there were dangers everywhere for civilians and navy personnel alike. Around the harbour, the menacing Stuka dive bombers posed a particular threat.

03 Thousands gather at East Mole

Synonymous with the evacuation, this concrete and wood jetty, running to 1.3km (0.8mi), was where 200,000 soldiers were rescued as the larger ships were able to anchor alongside it.

04 Rescue at the beaches

The little ships could get close to the beaches, though the shallows meant that soldiers still had to wade out. Just over 98,000 men were evacuated from them.

05 Ferrying from boat to boat

The little ships also came in handy with transporting troops to larger vessels like the pleasure ships and ferries. The smaller boats were much more nimble and could work quickly.

Notable boats

AN ASSORTMENT OF VESSELS TOOK UP THE CALL, FROM A GERMAN WWI BARGE TO A TITANIC SURVIVOR'S YACHT

Medway Queen
One of the most popular and luxurious paddle steamers, it was called up to serve in 1939. It rescued 7,000 men at Dunkirk.

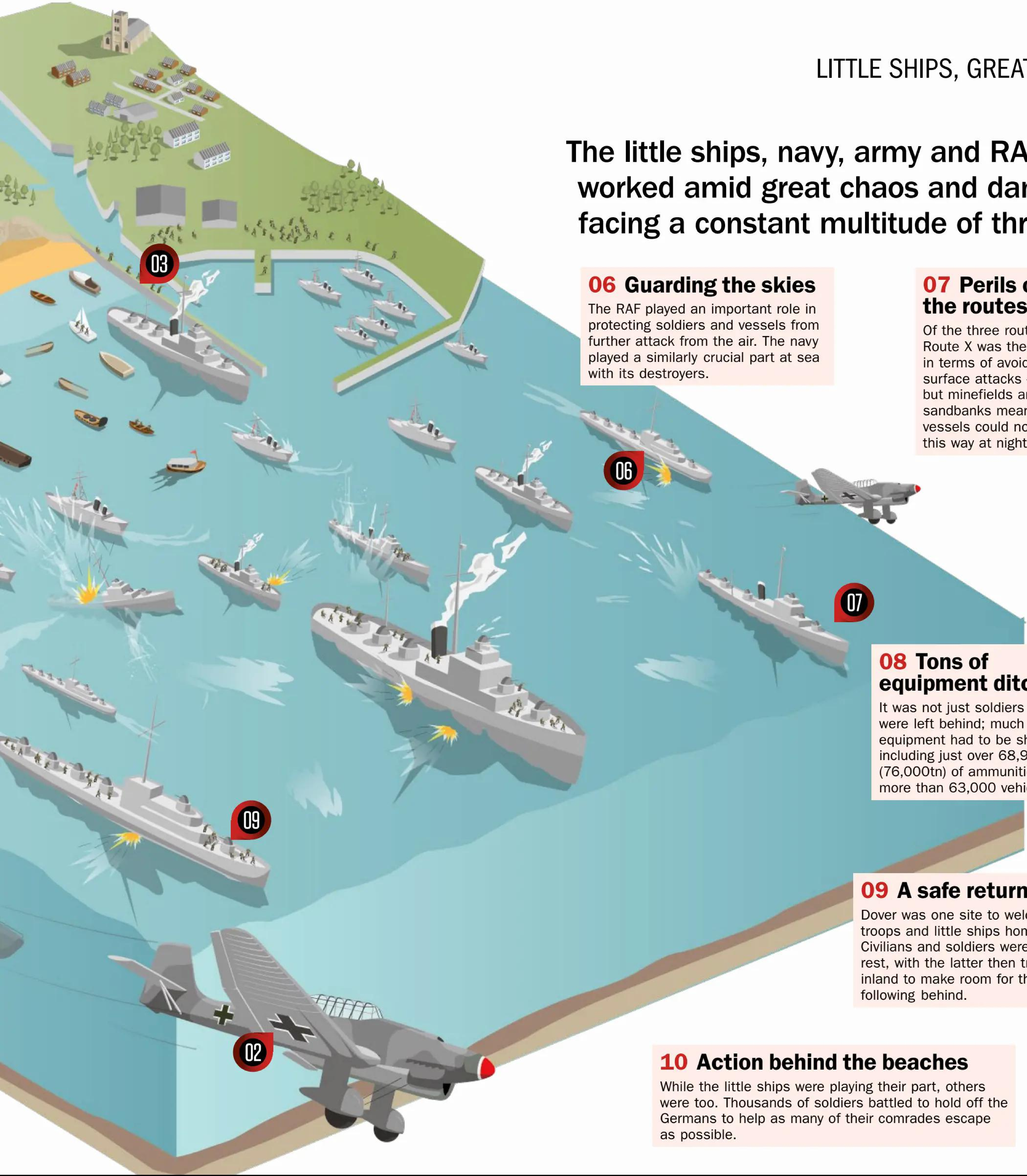
Tamzine
Tamzine was the smallest known vessel to participate at 4.5 metres (15 feet) in length and is now an exhibit at the Imperial War Museum.

Count Dracula
The German barge could have gone down with the SMS *Hindenburg* in 1918 but for a sailor who released it. The Royal Navy adopted the boat.

Mona's Isle
The steamer was the first little ship to set sail for Dunkirk. Despite enemy attacks, it safely brought over 2,634 soldiers in total.

Royal Daffodil
The ferry had a very successful operation, making seven round trips and evacuating 9,500 personnel, likely the highest figure.

The little ships, navy, army and RAF all worked amid great chaos and danger, facing a constant multitude of threats



06 Guarding the skies

The RAF played an important role in protecting soldiers and vessels from further attack from the air. The navy played a similarly crucial part at sea with its destroyers.

07 Perils of the routes

Of the three routes, Route X was the safest in terms of avoiding surface attacks – but minefields and sandbanks meant vessels could not travel this way at night.

08 Tons of equipment ditched

It was not just soldiers who were left behind; much equipment had to be shed, including just over 68,900t (76,000tn) of ammunition and more than 63,000 vehicles.

09 A safe return

Dover was one site to welcome troops and little ships home. Civilians and soldiers were able to rest, with the latter then travelling inland to make room for those following behind.

10 Action behind the beaches

While the little ships were playing their part, others were too. Thousands of soldiers battled to hold off the Germans to help as many of their comrades escape as possible.

Massey Shaw
The fireboat had only been to sea once before, but it served well at Dunkirk and went on to play a major role during the Blitz.

MASSEY SHAW

Sundowner
This yacht belonged to Charles Lightoller, the most senior officer to survive the *Titanic* disaster. He rescued 130 soldiers at Dunkirk.

Bluebird of Chelsea
Originally owned by record-breaking racing driver Malcolm Campbell, *Bluebird* got to Dunkirk after enduring two false starts.

Marchioness
The vessel survived Dunkirk, but its story still had a sad end. In 1989, it collided with a dredger and sank. Many passengers died.

Marchioness

Resolute
A cockle boat, *Resolute*'s crew had a narrow escape when the Germans began firing as they were getting soldiers aboard.

RESOLUTE
RYE

Fighting on the beaches

JOURNALIST HUGH SEBAG-MONTEFIORE THINKS THE SOLDIERS WHO KEPT THE GERMANS AT BAY DURING THE RESCUE MISSION DESERVE MORE CREDIT

Your book centres on the soldiers who defended the retreat route. How would you describe their contribution?
Well, what I'd say is if it hadn't been for them the evacuation would have been stopped. It would have started, but it might well have been stopped after the first night. That's the answer in a nutshell.

Were there any stories that particularly resonated?
What I found amazing was what happened at Cassel, involving a man called Roy Creswell. The British soldiers were locked up in a blockhouse. Germans were on the roof – they were throwing things down the chimney; they set it on fire with hand grenades and still Creswell's men held out for four or five days. They lasted out until 30 May when they surrendered, but it's an inspiring story.

Has there been enough emphasis on these soldiers, or do you think they have been almost forgotten?
Yes, they have been forgotten, but that's not to say that the little ships weren't vital – it wouldn't have succeeded without them and the Royal Navy and everything else; they all came together.

Why do you think the story of the little ships (and Dunkirk in general) has become so mythologised?
I think it may be because it's such a remarkable story and Dunkirk was so much about morale. People like the myth – it's uplifting to think about the wonderful Dunkirk spirit and the ships. And it was very difficult to find the stories of these soldiers. I looked into it for a long time; people who didn't have the luxury of taking a long time to do it, they have thought there's no story there.

What can you tell us about your relatives who were evacuated?
Two relatives were evacuated, my cousin Denzil Sebag-Montefiore and a cousin on my mother's side, Basil Jaffé. Denzil was a larger-than-life character when I knew him, but I don't know what he was like when he was young, though in my book I talk about when he got a Christmas hamper in 1939: rather than scoffing it himself, he shared it with all the soldiers in his platoon. At Dunkirk, he was trying to get into a little rowing boat but having difficulty, and a group of men came to his aid. There's a moral there – to be good to people, to those less fortunate than ourselves, and they will repay you in time.

Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's is the author of *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man*, while his lasest book, *Somme: Into the Breach*, is out now.

Dunkirk little ships leave for Dunkirk on the 70th anniversary

onto solid ground and convinced some of them, just as the German bombardment flared up once more. They threw themselves on board and the journey back to England could begin.

The final push came on 3 June, when about 26,000 men were brought across the Channel, 3,000 of them by the *Tynwald*, a pleasure steamer from the Isle of Man.

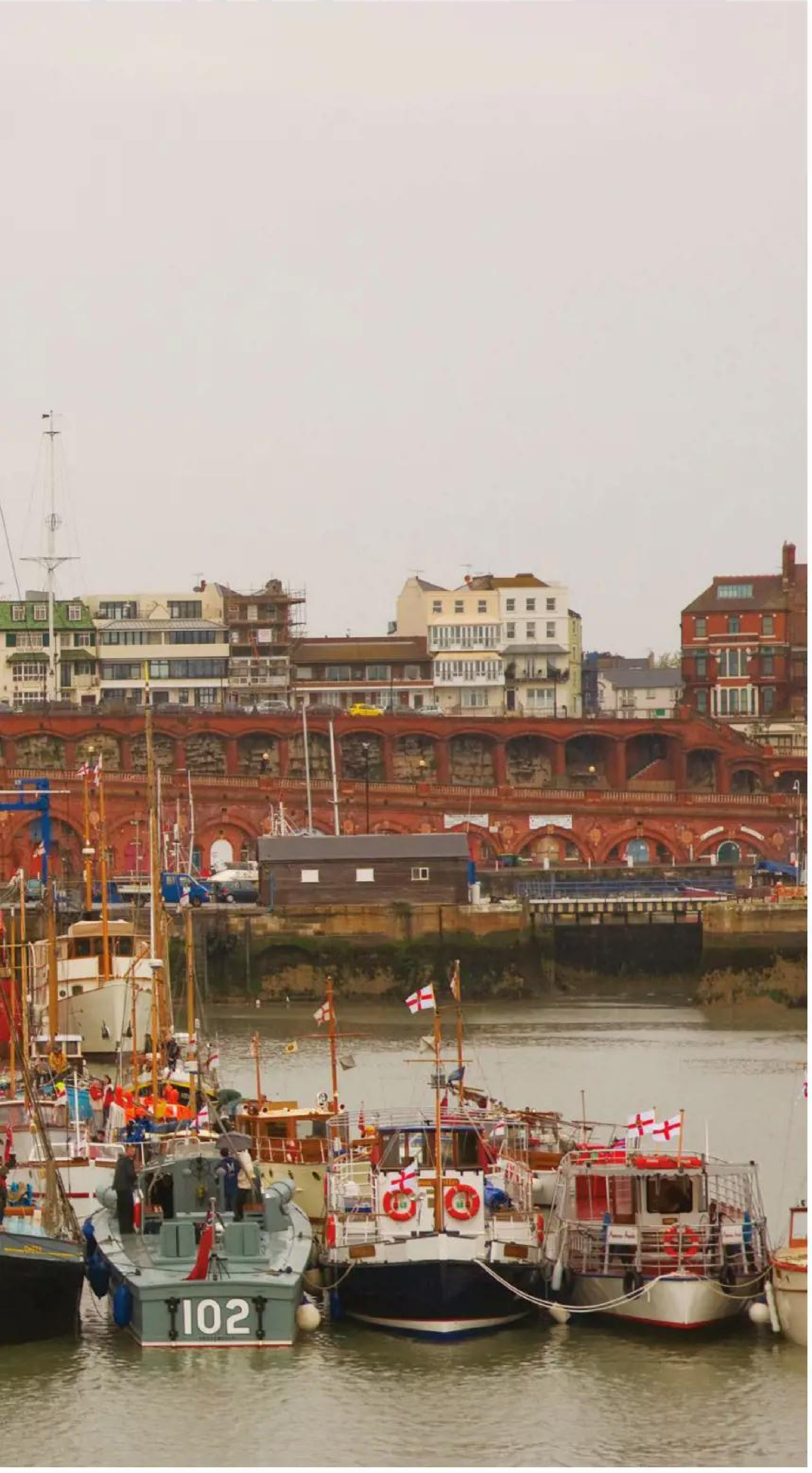
Operation Dynamo ended at 2.33 p.m. on 4 June. Thousands of French and British soldiers had bravely attempted to hold off the Germans to ensure their comrades' escapes. The biggest evacuation in military history had seen 338,000 soldiers rescued – 200,000 from the East Mole – among them 140,000 French, Belgian and Polish troops. Over 200 vessels were destroyed and 40,000 of British troops left behind.

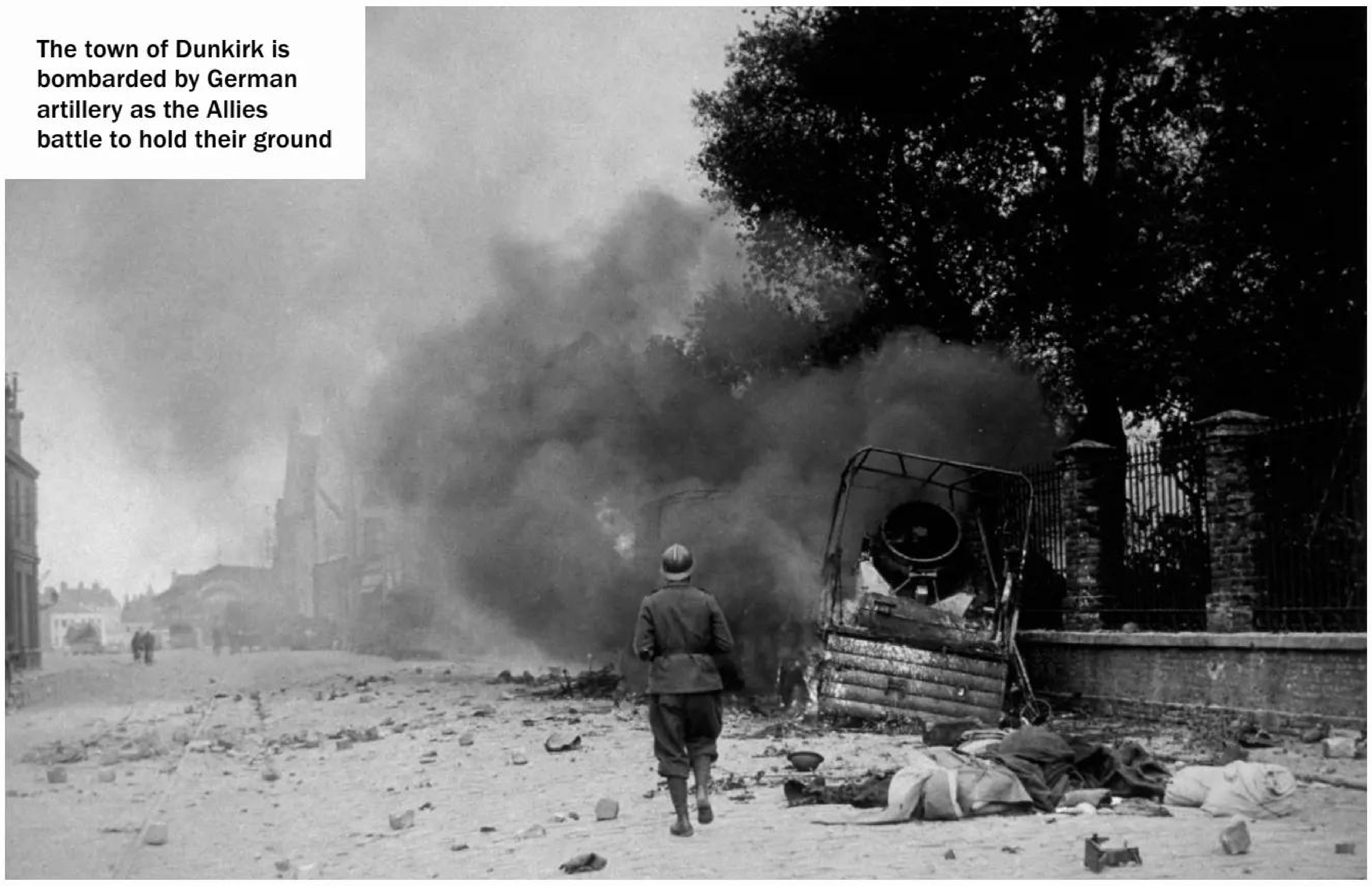
The now famous little ships proceeded through London on 9 June and were greeted by huge crowds and much cheering when they arrived at Westminster Bridge. Many of the boats resumed life as it was before Dunkirk, but some, sadly, could not be preserved. The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships later emerged, and 39 of them were the main attraction of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee pageant in 2012.

The same day Operation Dynamo concluded, Winston Churchill took to the House of Commons for his barnstorming 'We Shall Fight on the Beaches' speech. While these days it is remembered for rousing British morale, and did commend the efforts of the little ships and the armed forces alike, the Prime Minister actually warned against celebrating the evacuations too merrily: "We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations."

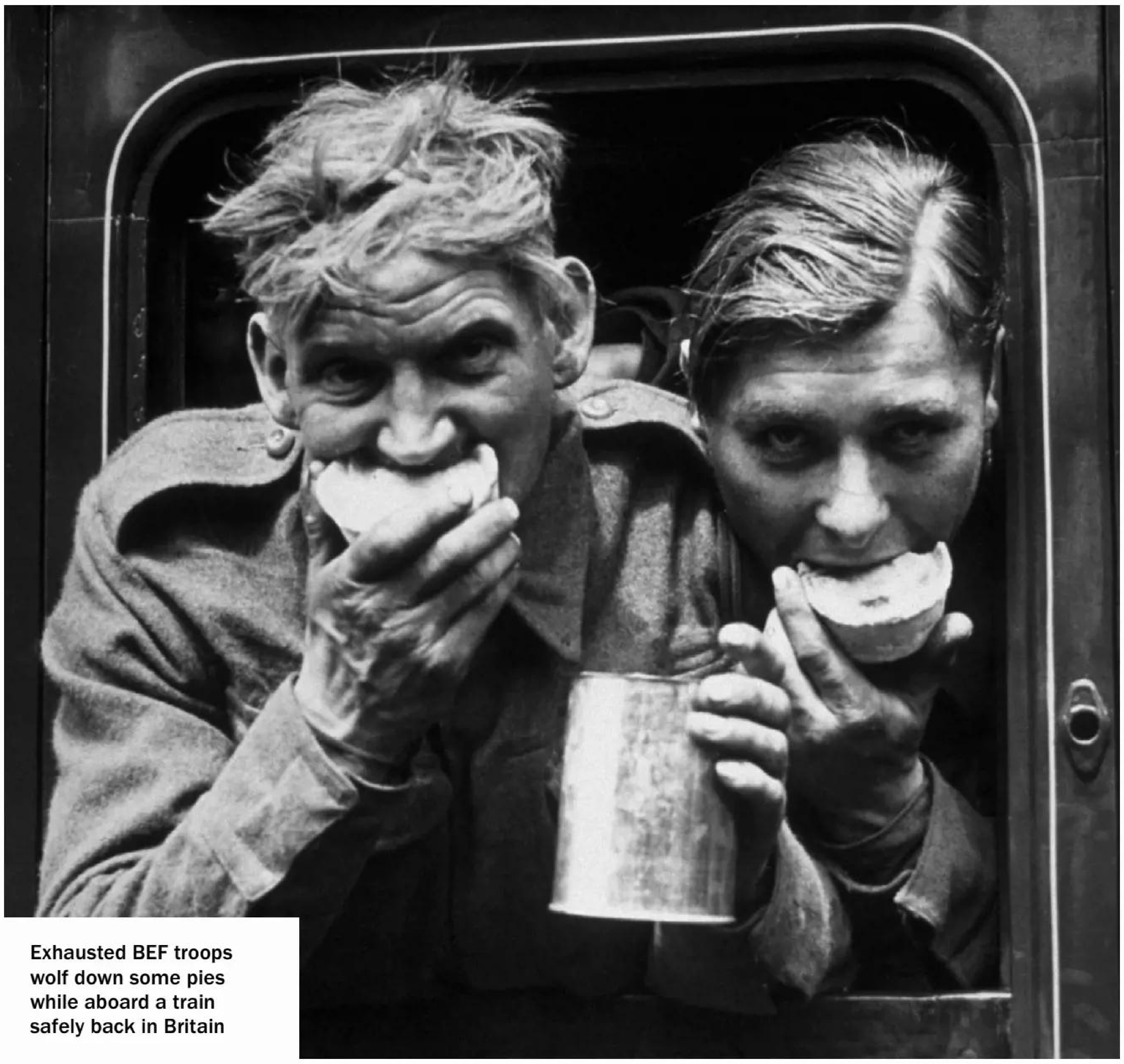
But the mythologising of the operation had already begun. "So long as the English tongue survives, the word Dunkirk will be spoken with reverence," reported *The New York Times* on 1 June 1940. "In that harbour, such a hell on earth as never blazed before, at the end of a lost battle, the rags and blemishes that had hidden the soul of democracy fell away. There, beaten but unconquered, in shining splendour, she faced the enemy, this shining thing in the souls of free men, which Hitler cannot command. It is in the great tradition of democracy. It is a future. It is victory."

But perhaps the most famous commentary is contained in novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley's celebrated *Postscripts* radio





The town of Dunkirk is bombarded by German artillery as the Allies battle to hold their ground



Exhausted BEF troops wolf down some pies while aboard a train safely back in Britain

broadcasts for the BBC (which aired on a Sunday night throughout 1940 and 1941).

"Here at Dunkirk is another English epic. And to my mind what was most characteristically English about it – so typical, so absurd and yet so grand and gallant that you hardly knew whether to laugh or cry when you read about them – was the part played in the difficult and dangerous embarkation – not by the warships, magnificent though they were – but by the little pleasure steamers," he said.

"We've known them, and laughed at them, these fussy little steamers, all our lives. We have watched them load and unload their crowds of holiday passengers – the gents full of high spirits and bottled beer, the ladies eating pork pies, the children sticky with peppermint rock...

"There was always something old-fashioned, a Dickens touch, a mid-Victorian air about them… Yes, those 'Brighton Belles' and 'Brighton Queens' left that innocent foolish world of theirs… to sail into the inferno, to defy bombs, shells, magnetic mines. I tell you, we were proud of the *Gracie Fields*… This little steamer, like all her brave and battered sisters, is immortal – she'll go sailing proudly down the years in the epic of Dunkirk."

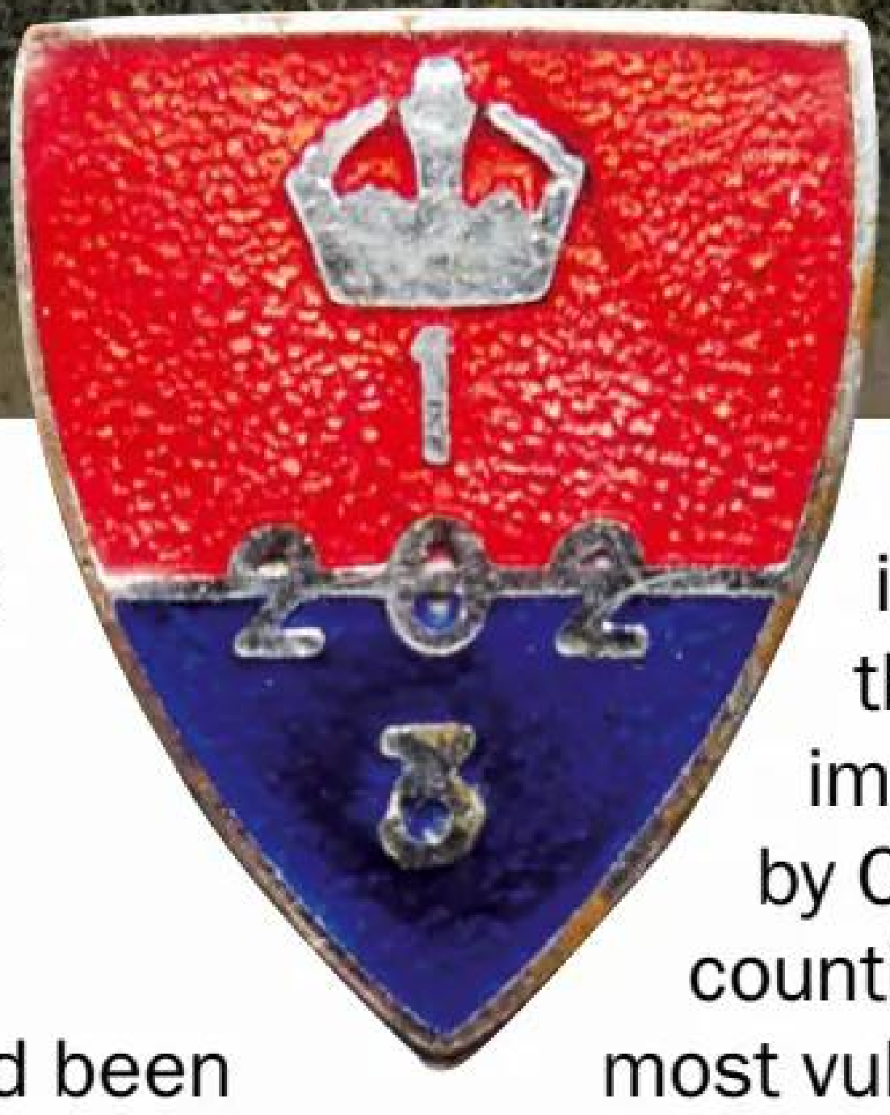
> *"The now famous little ships proceeded through London on 9 June and were greeted by huge crowds and much cheering when they arrived at Westminster Bridge"*

BRITAIN'S SECRET ARMY

In the summer of 1940, invasion seemed inevitable, with Britain on its knees. However, a highly secret guerrilla force was being created to confront any Nazi offensive

WORDS **ANDREW CHATTERTON**

Warsash/Hook Patrol Hampshire



A lapel badge is the only public recognition the Auxiliary Units received

Nineteen-forty witnessed some of the darkest days in British history. By the height of the summer, most of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had been successfully evacuated from Dunkirk, but it arrived back home without the majority of its equipment and weapons. Meanwhile, the German Army stood just across the Channel, poised to invade. Although the general perception is that the country was on its knees, it was during these desperate days that a highly secret guerrilla force was instigated; one designed to 'stay behind' and cause as much chaos as possible, delaying any invading army.

Secret beginnings in Kent

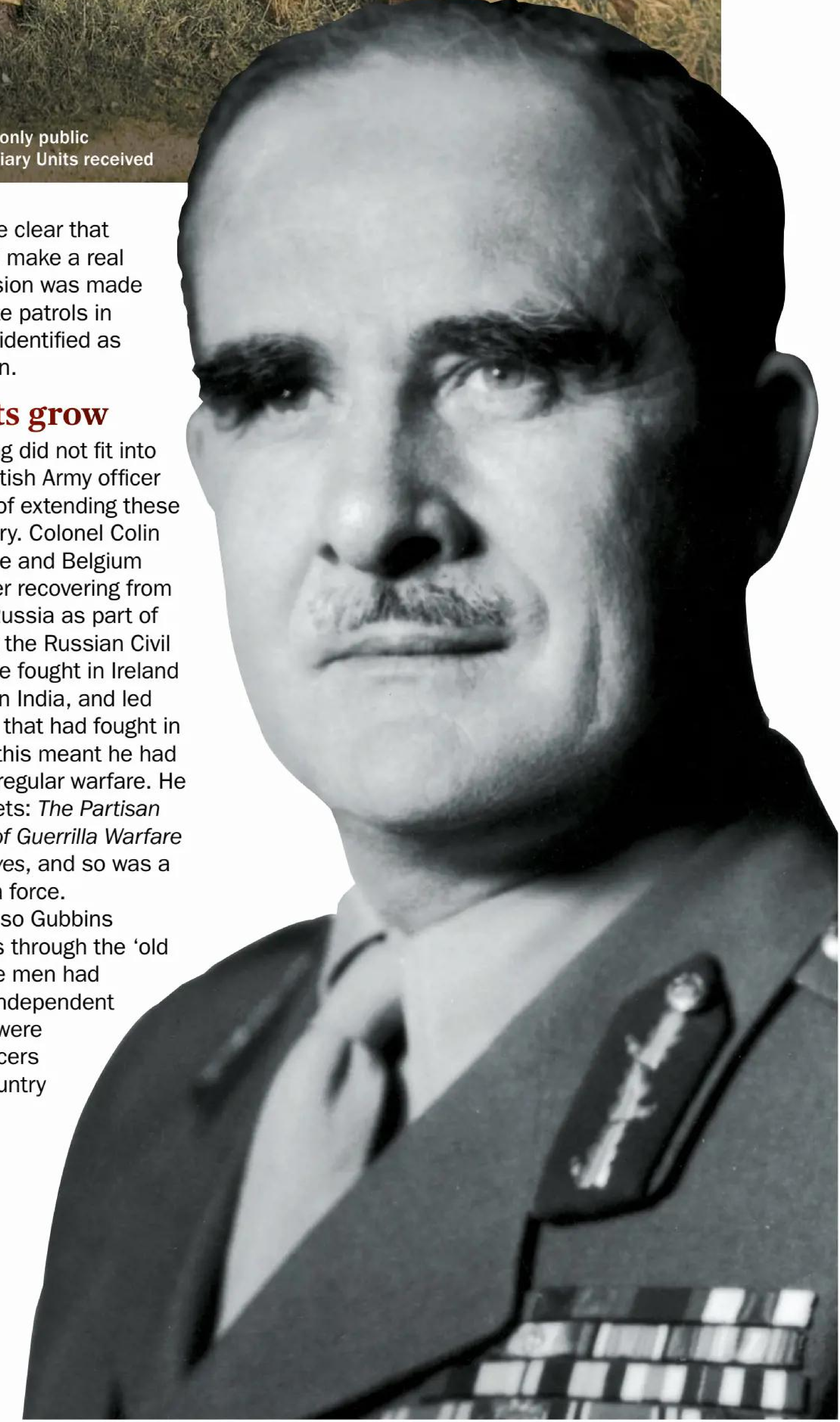
By June, Peter Fleming, the brother of Ian Fleming (the creator of James Bond), was busy organising a group of civilian volunteers in Kent named the XII Corps Observation Unit. This became the prototype for the Auxiliary Units. Fleming was the perfect fit for organising such a force. A dashing former Guards officer, he was a pre-war explorer and had authored books on his travels in China and the jungles of Brazil. He worked for Military Intelligence (Research) and was immediately set the task of gathering local civilian volunteers and training them in explosives and sabotage.

Fleming had quickly identified and organised a number of men into effective outfits ready to cause as much disruption to the invading German forces as possible. He collected stores of equipment and explosives, built rudimentary underground dug-outs for the volunteers and had identified targets to be destroyed upon invasion. It became clear that these patrols could make a real impact and the decision was made by Churchill to replicate patrols in counties that had been identified as most vulnerable to invasion.

The Auxiliary Units grow

Another man who like Fleming did not fit into the traditional mould of a British Army officer was given the responsibility of extending these patrols throughout the country. Colonel Colin Gubbins had served in France and Belgium as a gunner during WWI. After recovering from a war injury he was sent to Russia as part of the Allied intervention during the Russian Civil War in 1919. In the 1920s he fought in Ireland against the IRA, spent time in India, and led the Independent Companies that had fought in Norway in early 1940. All of this meant he had learnt the effectiveness of irregular warfare. He had also written three booklets: *The Partisan Leader's Handbook*, *The Art of Guerrilla Warfare* and *How to Use High Explosives*, and so was a natural choice to lead such a force.

Time was of the essence, so Gubbins recruited like-minded officers through the 'old boys network'. Many of these men had also served with him in the Independent Companies in Norway. They were designated as intelligent officers (IOs) and sent across the country



Major General Sir Colin Gubbins, chief of the British Special Operations Executive and thereby tasked with organising covert warfare during WWII

> *“These men would be leaving their families at a dangerous time. It was a huge sacrifice, but one every auxiliary was willing to make”*

to identify key areas and patrol leaders, often from the ranks of the newly established Local Defence Volunteers (LDV).

In the short and only official history to be written about the Auxiliary Units, Major Nigel Oxenden said this of the recruiting process: “IOs automatically looked for game-keeper or poacher types of recruits, as being already trained in everything but explosives. If these men were also last war veterans, so much the better; they were probably steady, and well aware of their own limitations.”

When a mysterious man came to the door of William Sage Ratford in the sleepy village of Bentley in Suffolk he was told that he was looking for “gamekeepers, poachers and burglars to form this group”. Clearly, not your typical British Army recruitment.

The level of security surrounding the formation of the Auxiliary Units was huge. Dennis Blanchard in Bewholme, Yorkshire, remembers being asked by an officer whether he would be willing to “do a little job”. When Dennis asked for more details he was told he couldn’t be told any more but it would involve “intensive training of a secret and dangerous nature”. Another auxiliary, Reginald Clutterham, was a farm worker in Ashill, Norfolk. Shortly after joining the LDV, he was approached by a man and asked “if I would like to do something more interesting than the Home Guard. Apparently, I had been observed for a month to see what sort of people I mixed with and what we talked about. If I wanted to join this special organisation I was told that I would have to sign the Official Secrets Act”.

After these patrol leaders were identified and recruited, it was up to them to form their own patrol of trusted men and begin to organise themselves into an effective sabotage unit. Patrol leaders tended to recruit colleagues, friends and relatives, and even enemies, with some patrols being made up of both gamekeepers and poachers. Each patrol was made up of five to eight men who lived within close proximity to one another.

By September 1940, huge progress had been made. In a note to the secretary of state for war on 25 September, Churchill said, “I have been following with much interest the growth and development of the new guerrilla formations … known as ‘Auxiliary Units’. From what I hear these units are being organised with thoroughness and imagination, and should, in the event of invasion, prove a useful addition to the regular forces.” Eventually more than 3,500 men were recruited the length of Britain, from the Outer Hebrides to the tip of Cornwall.

‘Thuggery’ – the role of the auxiliaries

It was Gubbins who first fully sketched out what role the Auxiliary Units (a deliberately nondescript name designed to throw the enemy off the scent) should play in the event of a German invasion.

When the Germans came, the auxiliaries were to simply disappear, and because

A Home Guardsman handles a Tommy gun during a training session at the War Office School in Surrey

© Getty

Sandford Levvy Patrol Somerset in an OB

A mock up of an operational base

Intact operational base in Devon

they had signed the Official Secrets Act, they could tell no one, not even their closest family, where they were going or what they were up to. The significance of this should not be understated. These men would be leaving their families at an incredibly dangerous time. It was a huge sacrifice, but one it seems that every auxiliary was willing to make in order to help protect the country.

Their role was not to take on the invading army in a direct fight. Mostly operating at night, they were to destroy ammunition and fuel dumps, transport, aircraft, bridges, railways, anything that slowed down the German advance and gave the regular army the time it needed to regroup and launch a counterattack.

Any direct contact with the enemy would be in the course of gaining entry to a target. Auxiliaries were trained in silent killing and other ways of dealing with sentries, utilising the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife and other 'thuggery' methods, including unarmed combat and targeting 'vulnerable' areas of the human body. Some auxiliaries reported that they were told to dismember the bodies of enemy sentries to put the 'fear of God' into other enemy soldiers who would later discover them, a tactic used by guerrilla fighters throughout history.

Each patrol was given enough rations to last approximately 11–14 days; after this they were expected to live off the land. Realistically the rations represented their likely life expectancy. This was very much considered a suicide mission and the members of each patrol realised that. William Ratford said, "Perhaps we would have been heroes for a bit. But it would have been suicidal, I should think."

No patrol member could be caught. If too badly injured during a raid, many auxiliaries reported that they would expect to be killed by their fellow patrol members rather than fall into the enemy's hands and potentially give away the location of the operational base (OB) under torture.

Each patrol also worked in complete isolation. In these early, crucial days of the Auxiliary Units, patrols in the same county would have no idea of the location of the operational base of the neighbouring patrol, or indeed who was in it. The level of secrecy, especially during 1940, was understandably high.

Into the bunkers

Once the invasion had started, and the enemy had reached their area, each

Coleshill House - training HQ

EARLY TRAINING WAS UNDERTAKEN BY EACH INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, SUPPORTED BY DISGUISED TRAINING MANUALS, WHICH AT FIRST SIGHT APPEARED TO BE INNOCENT CALENDARS OR FARMING HANDBOOKS

In late 1940, Gubbins moved his HQ from Whitehall to Coleshill House in the small hamlet of Coleshill on the Oxfordshire/Wiltshire border. Coleshill was also used as the training centre for patrols throughout the country. Such was the secrecy that surrounded the Auxiliary Units that those attending courses were instructed to get a train to the nearby town of Highworth and told to report to the local Post Office, where they had to give the postmistress, Mabel Stranks, a password. She would then call Coleshill House, who would send a vehicle, which would drive a convoluted route back to the stately home before off-loading the volunteers. Such was the seriousness with which Mabel took her role, when Montgomery came to visit, he too was subjected to the same vetting process and forced to wait sometime while she confirmed his credentials.

When the auxiliaries reached Coleshill House, they spent weekends training in all aspects of sabotage and guerrilla warfare: navigating through the countryside at night, explosives training, unarmed combat, firing ranges, learning to be comfortable staying in OBs, and much more. A core training staff stayed in the house, with the auxiliaries billeted in the stables. The training was of the highest level, much more so than the regular Home Guard. Many of the techniques learnt by the auxiliaries were also passed onto the Special Operations Executive (SOE) later in the war (Gubbins and Fleming were to leave the Auxiliary Units at the end of 1940 to establish SOE). Indeed, some auxiliaries were recruited into the SAS due to their high level of combat training and aptitude.

A picture of Coleshill House taken by photographer Charles Latham

A member of the British Home Guard equipped with a revolver, 21 September 1940

patrol member would head straight to their operational base, a secret underground bunker built with heavily disguised entrances.

Initially, OBs tended to be built by the patrols themselves. However, unless the particular expertise needed to build such a bunker happened to be within the patrol, these tended not to be hugely successful, with some patrols discovering the difficulty of breathing underground without ventilation.

Later on, OBs were built by Royal Engineers brought in from other parts of the country for security reasons. These OBs had disguised hatches that opened through counter-weight mechanisms that led down into a chamber that contained bunks, tables, storage areas, water tanks and sometimes an Elsan chemical toilet and cooker (the smoke from the cooker would disappear through a pipe and into a hollow tree on the surface so the enemy saw no sign of it), along with a large amount of explosives. There was also an escape tunnel giving the patrol members a chance to get away if a German patrol discovered the OB. The OBs were similar in design to Anderson shelters and Nissen huts, with curved elephant iron and concrete blocks. There was often a blast wall at the bottom of the entrance shaft in case of a grenade being thrown down the hatch.

Despite the better design, the OBs remained pretty grim places to stay. Patrols had to contend with dark and damp conditions, and if the Germans had ever arrived on British shores the men hiding below ground would also have faced the constant threat of being discovered and captured or killed.

Many patrols also had an observation post (OP) near the OB, sometimes connected by a telephone wire (up to half a mile away). The OP was designed to allow one member of the patrol to monitor enemy movement and give the rest of the patrol a warning if it looked like they were to be discovered. It also meant that during the day the auxiliary in the OP could look for potential targets in the local area.

"These men are to have revolvers"

In August, Colonel Gubbins' weekly report to the CIC, which was already read with interest by the prime minister, recommended the issue of revolvers. Churchill added a note: "These men are to have revolvers." Accordingly, 400 .32 Colt automatics were distributed at once

> *"Their objective was to destroy their target, not to get into a running battle with the enemy"*

Sandford Levvy Patrol Somerset training

and the next month a 100 per cent issue of .38 revolvers was made – a remarkable achievement when the country was so low on equipment and weapons. This was followed much later by ammunition that fitted them. These revolvers and the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knives were a particular source of pride to the auxiliaries and enhanced their reputation of toughness, certainly in contrast to the often ill-equipped Home Guard.

Patrols were prioritised when it came to weapons. Thompson sub-machine guns and the Browning automatic rifle were both issued in some numbers, as were Sten guns. Also issued was the rather sinister .22 sniper rifle, fitted with a powerful telescopic sight and silencer. The auxiliaries who received these were told that they were for sniping at high-ranking German officers and for picking off tracker dogs before they came too close. Other auxiliaries have reported that they were to use the weapons to assassinate Britons that were considered collaborators.

Auxiliaries were also issued with close-combat weapons such as garrottes, rubber truncheons, knuckle dusters and knobkerries. These were the patrols' primary fighting weapons. The key to their success was silence. Their objective was to destroy their target, not to get into a running battle with the enemy.

Alongside close-combat weapons, the other principle materiels available to the patrols were a huge number of explosives. For example, after waiting 20 years for the army to come and collect the ordnance his patrols had left behind at the end of the war, Captain Reg Sennet, a group leader of five patrols in Essex, eventually told the police, who in turn called the army. They retrieved a remarkable haul: 547 kilograms (1,205 pounds) of explosives, 1,140 metres (3,742 feet) of delayed-action fusing, 283 metres (930 feet) of safety fuse, 144 time pencils, 1,207 L-Delay switches, 1,271 detonators, 719 booby-traps, 314 paraffin bombs, 131 fog signals, 121 smoke bombs, 36 slabs of guncotton and 33 booby-trap switches attached to made-up charges.

Right: A Fairbairn–Sykes fighting knife from Fort William Museum

In addition to these explosives, patrols were issued with grenades, including the Mills bomb, the sticky bomb, self-igniting phosphorous grenades and smoke grenades. It's clear that the Auxiliary Units were prioritised over and above the Home Guard and in some cases the regular army when it came to receiving newly developed weapons. They were heavily armed and, more importantly, very highly trained.

Would the auxiliaries have been effective?

While undoubtedly auxiliaries had full confidence in their ability, their weapons and their determination, the debate around how successful they would have been continues. The Germans dealt with any form of resistance in occupied territories with the utmost brutality, and in the event of a successful landing in Britain, it's almost certain they would have meted out the same merciless reprisals to the natives. How the patrols would have reacted to their loves ones being executed as a result of their actions is difficult to say.

Equally, not even the most ambitious auxiliary could claim that their form of guerrilla warfare would have lasted any real length of time. Inevitably, they would have been caught or killed in a raid or the location of their OB found. The patrols could not have acted in a similar manner to the French Resistance, where a long-term campaign of resistance to occupation was key.

In his book *Invasion 1940*, which came out in 1957, Peter Fleming mentions the Auxiliary Units briefly and sums up what he thought their effectiveness might be: "Assuming the British resistance movement would have melted away in the white heat of German ruthlessness, it might have struck some useful blows; and with a bridgehead under heavy counterattack its diversionary activities would have had a value wholly disproportionate to the number of guerrillas involved."

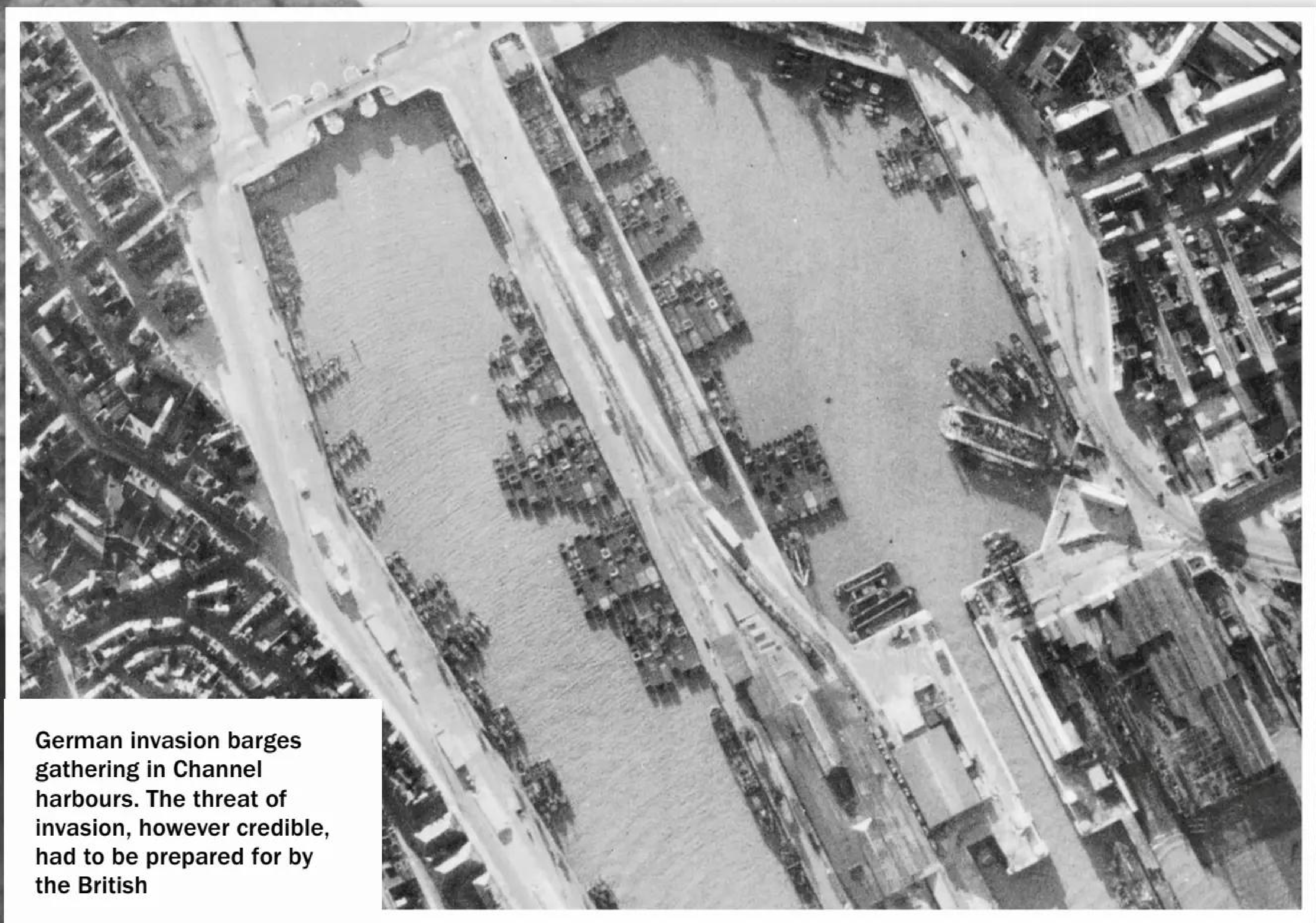
Never called upon to act in 1940, or throughout the war, many auxiliaries simply went back to their normal lives when stood down in November 1944, with most taking the fact they were highly trained guerrilla fighters to the grave.

CART
The Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team

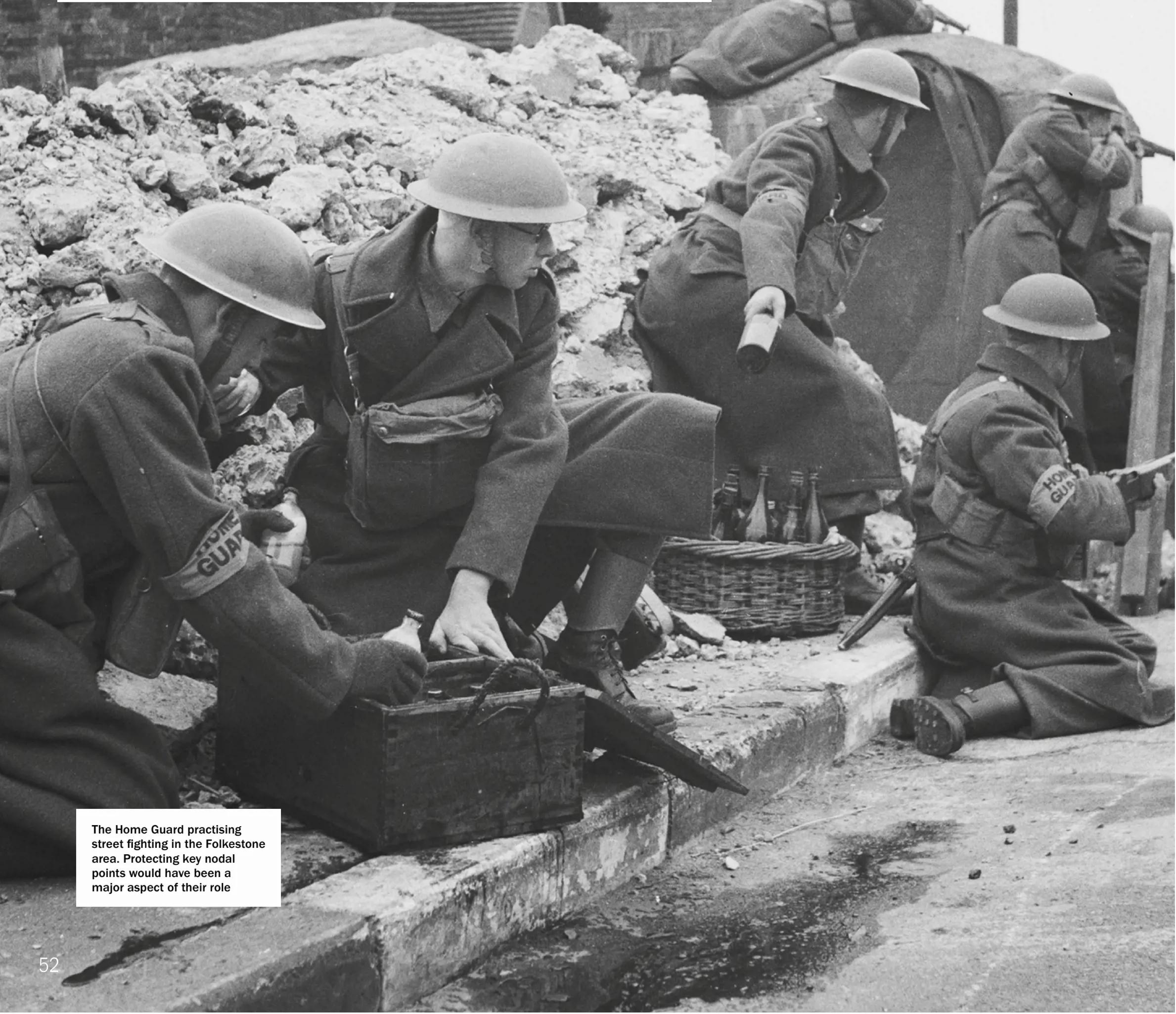
The Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team researches the Auxiliary Units, their training, equipment, Operational Bases and records all details in the British Resistance Archive

www.staybehinds.com

Images: Getty Images, Alamy, staybehinds.com



German invasion barges gathering in Channel harbours. The threat of invasion, however credible, had to be prepared for by the British



The Home Guard practising street fighting in the Folkestone area. Protecting key nodal points would have been a major aspect of their role

DEFENDING BRITAIN

In the event of a German invasion, Britain would have deployed a deadly network of defences to impede the enemy at every turn

WORDS **ANDREW CHATTERTON**

Operation Sea Lion, Germany's 'plan' to invade Britain during WWII, never came to fruition. Britain was able to defend itself on the sea and in the air, and Hitler's divide and dominate strategy over his own generals and armed forces meant a joined-up, effective plan to successfully subjugate the island was never likely to materialise. Some argue that Hitler never even had any intention to invade at all, but with barges being collected in the newly captured Channel ports and Britain having witnessed the German forces speed through and defeat all in front of them on mainland Europe, invasion seemed very likely indeed.

Britain's defences have been portrayed since the war as a combination of old men and bumbling inefficiency, and even now, what appear to be lonely and ineffective concrete pillboxes that remain in the fields and towns throughout Britain seem to confirm this narrative. However, the reality is very different.

To understand the effectiveness of Britain's defences, one has to play out the invasion – and with a few factors to consider. Firstly, that the RAF had been defeated, which meant that the Luftwaffe had some control of the skies above Britain, and particularly the southeast corner. Secondly, that the Kriegsmarine had managed to get some of the barges across the Channel and landed men on the beaches of Kent.

There is some 'precedent' for this. In 1974, a war game was organised to see how Operation Sea Lion might have played out if the order had been given in 1940. Taking place at the Army Staff College at Camberley and attended by a whole host of senior veterans from both sides, the game showed that even without complete air superiority, the Germans were able to land 90,000 troops. We take up the narrative from this point as we follow them on their journey inland. We are going to presume that the Germans had taken the shortest route across the Channel. Hitler's Führer Directive No. 16 was issued on 16 July 1940, which initiated the planning for Operation Sea Lion. The next day, General Franz Halder outlined how two armies, 16th and 9th, were to make landings on the south coast of England from Folkestone to Worthing, and it is the former we will focus on.

The first thing that the troops climbing out of the barges would have encountered was a range of beach defences. Mined beaches, fencing, scaffolding and barbed wire would have stretched out in front of them. They would have also been confronted by pillboxes and gun emplacements at key points surrounding the beaches. The German troops would have looked up on the crest of hills above Folkestone and seen a line of pillboxes with an all-round field of fire. There to deliver murderous fire down upon the beaches, these pillboxes were also designed to defend against an attack from the rear.

These beach defences were not there for any long resistance, but rather to hold up the invasion on the beaches and cause as many casualties as possible. It would not have been the Home Guard in these pillboxes and gun emplacements as is so often presumed, but rather highly trained regular troops. The pillboxes themselves would also have appeared very different to the simple concrete structures we see today. They would have been camouflaged and supported by slit trenches and foxholes. They would also be linked to other pillboxes and defensive sites in the area, so that a properly co-ordinated defence could be implemented.

Once the German troops had overcome the beach defences, they would not have had a free run into the country. Rather, General Ironside's (Commander-in-Chief Home Forces) strategy of pillboxes and stop lines, although much maligned at the time and since, would have forced the German forces in the direction the British defenders wanted them to go. Ironside, with a limited amount of mobility in his armoury, designed a strategy that allowed him to use what he did have effectively. With stop lines made up of anti-tank traps (including dragon's teeth, anti-tank blocks, ditches and minefields and other obstacles) and pillboxes, the Germans would have looked for the path of least resistance. This was exactly Ironside's plan. By forcing the Germans in the direction he wanted them to take, he could then utilise his limited mobility. Without this he would have been forced to disperse his mobile forces too widely, making them ineffectual. By funnelling the invaders in the direction they wanted them to go, around and beyond Folkestone, GHQ could push the mobile counterattack knowing where the Germans were going and therefore hit them effectively.

The civilian forces

Helping the regular forces were the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), later renamed the Home Guard.

Spetisbury Auxiliary Unit

Unlike the general perception, the average age of a member of the Home Guard was 35, with many having military experience during WWI. The Home Guard's role was to guard nodal points in towns and villages such as bridges or crossroads, railway bridges and key infrastructure, including Post Office telephone exchanges, gas, electricity and water supplies. Home Guard battalions were also tasked with dismantling petrol stations so that German tanks could not simply pull in and fill up as they had done in France. Once the expected British counterattack began, these units would then put the parts back, thereby allowing British tanks to fill up. Specific Home Guard units were also founded in factories to initially protect them and then, if they were overrun, dismantle or destroy them.

LDV detachments from Deal, Dover and Folkestone were formed in May 1940, but by July that year they had been turned into the Cinque Ports Battalion. Their specific role was to protect the towns and harbours alongside the considerable presence of regular troops in these key areas. In contrast to the widely held perception that all Home Guard units were armed for months with just pitchforks and broom handles, this unit was immediately supplied with P14 rifles, which were then quickly replaced by Ross and American P17 rifles. They were able to patrol within hours of being formed and would have provided another obstacle for the German troops coming inland from the beaches.

Another local Home Guard unit was the 7th Lyminge Battalion. Located just behind Folkestone, this battalion was formed to protect the local village, but it was also in a prime position to guard against the threat of parachute troops. The Fallschirmjäger, the German airborne forces, had already proved their worth and effectiveness during the invasion of Europe. This 'new' threat reverberated across Britain and did much to hasten the formation of the LDV/Home Guard. So, while the Cinque Ports Home Guard took on the forces coming in from the sea, their colleagues in the Lyminge Battalion would be attacking the parachute and glider troops, ensuring that they could not attack key infrastructure or join up with the troops arriving from the coast.

While civilians were joining Home Guard units, they were also being recruited into highly secret groups designed to slow up the advance and provide key, timely information on where the advance was heading.

As the Germans came off the beaches, hitting stop lines and pillboxes, they would have also found that their supplies were being destroyed, key infrastructure was being blown up, and officers, sentries and British collaborators assassinated. This would have been the work of the Auxiliary Units, patrols of six to eight civilian men operating from secret underground bases called operational bases (OB). They would have destroyed fuel and ammo dumps, convoys, train tracks and bridges, aircraft, German HQs, and assassinated officers and British collaborators.

In the woods above the village of Drellingore, a village five kilometres (three miles) northeast of Folkestone, was such an OB. The patrol, made up of local farmers, labourers, engineers and a police constable, would have disappeared as soon as the Germans came near to the village; their families and friends would have had no knowledge of what they were up to.

Led by farmer Sergeant George Marsh, the patrol would have come out at night and caused as much chaos as possible to slow up the German advance to give the regular troops time to recover and counter. Their role was a suicidal one, with enough rations to last two weeks – essentially their life expectancy. It was highly secret, and although it would have amounted to a short, sharp snap at the heel of the German advance, it was a crucial one.

The invasion of France and the Low Countries showed that the German forces could move rapidly with supplies, providing the front-line troops with everything they needed. The Auxiliary Units were there to stop this, with the Drellingore Patrol targeting the roads coming out from the key harbours – Hockley Sole, a large country house nearby that was likely to have been taken as a local HQ by the invading forces, as well as the Folkestone railway viaduct and swing-bridge.

The Germans, not knowing what was hitting them, would have slowed up their advance as they 'dealt' with the issue and tried to bring in new supplies and troops to replace those that had been destroyed. The Drellingore Patrol were under no illusions what this would have meant for them. Sam Osborne, a farmer and butcher and patrol member said, "We made a pact among ourselves that if anyone was captured we would polish them off. Better to be shot by a friend than be tortured."

Alongside all this, the invading troops were also being spied upon by another civilian group, the Special Duties Branch. As the German forces made their way through Folkestone, they would have passed civilians on the street, staring in fear and disbelief. Among these 'ordinary' civilians was a journalist named Harry Hickingbotham, and the group he had been asked to recruit included a local farmer, a tailor, the manager of a local motor firm, a schoolmaster, a publican and a farm labourer. These people, while observing the troops passing through, would also be making mental and physical notes.

Highly trained in the recognition of German units and insignia, weapons, vehicles and direction of travel, these 'observers' would write down this information in basic code on a piece of edible paper and place it under their tongue. They would then drop it off at a dead letter drop from where a runner would take it on to the next. These drops would be something as simple as an Oxo cube tin on a windowsill, a loose brick in a graveyard or something more sophisticated, such as a fake tree stump with a revolving top, with the message placed in a split tennis ball and rolled down the tree stump and to the next drop or a civilian wireless operator. In Harry's case, his wireless set was hidden in some caves surrounding Folkestone, where the last runner would bring the message. He would then radio it on to the Auxiliary Territorial Service women in secret underground bases, in this case located in Hollingbourne, Kent. These incredibly brave

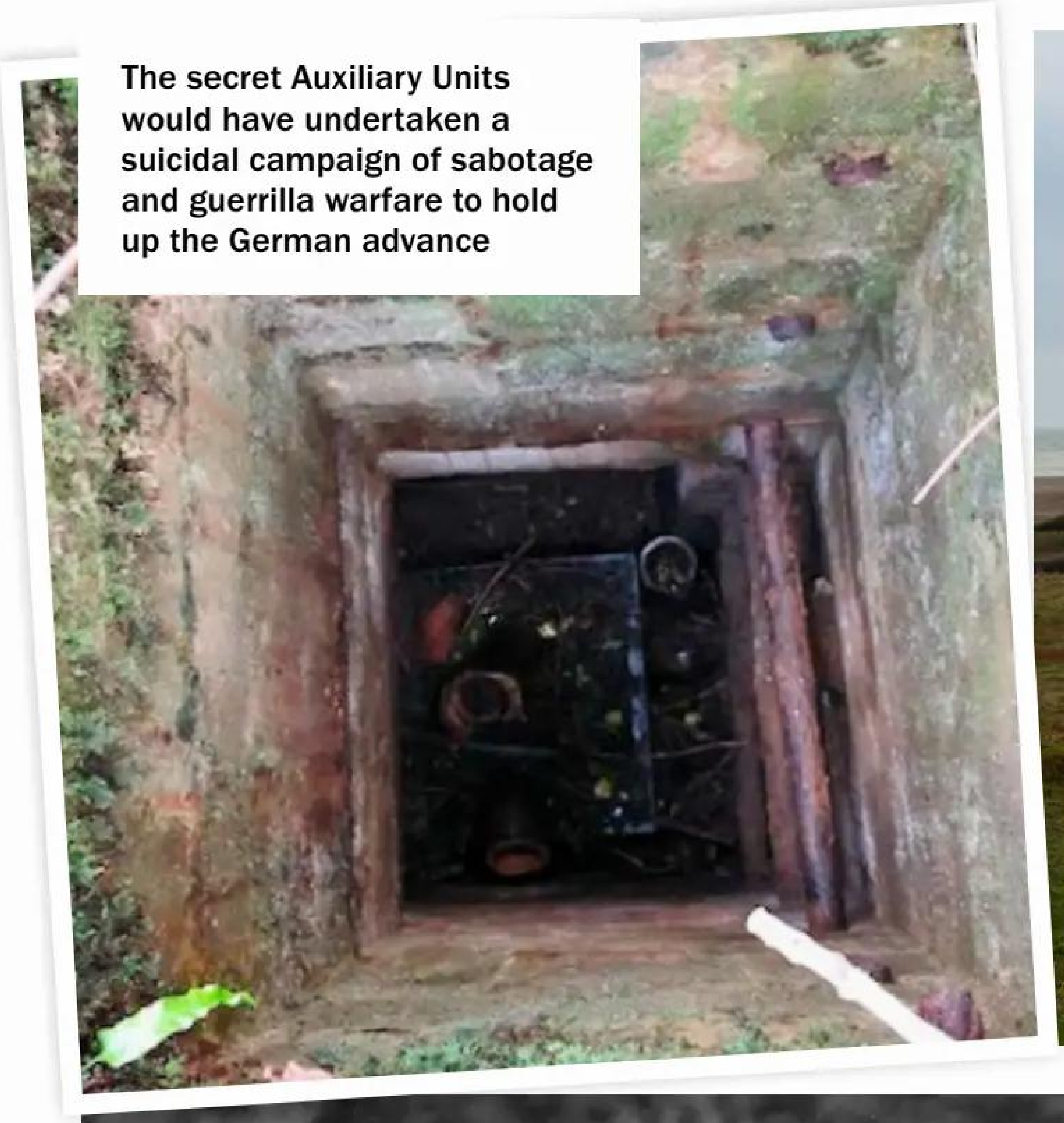
"The Special Duties Branch operatives would have been critical in keeping senior decision-makers informed"

women would have sent the information on to GHQ, allowing them to make timely, informed decisions about regular troop counterattacks. This was another lesson learnt from the invasion of Western Europe. The Blitzkrieg had taken the Allies by surprise, and the Germans were 'flying' through, with the Allied armies unable to keep up with where they were going and in what numbers. The Special Duties Branch operatives would have been critical in keeping senior decision-makers informed of troop movements.

When Churchill gave his speech in early June 1940, he said, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender". He gave this speech in the knowledge that the full level of preparations were already in place. Seen in context, the pillboxes, stop lines, the use of regular troops and mobile reserve, the reality of the Home Guard being a relatively youthful, effective defensive force, to say nothing of the secret civilian elements, came together to make an effective strategy. The Germans landing in and around Folkestone would have come across layer after layer of defence.

This was played out in the 1974 war game, which, because of the Official Secrets Act, could not even consider the Auxiliary Units and Special Duties Branch. Of the 90,000 troops 'landed' on the beaches, only 15,400 made it back to France. Around 33,000 were taken prisoner, 26,000 were killed and 15,000 drowned in the Channel. The German troops struggled to get past the defences and were held up by the regular troops and Home Guard. The Royal Navy then destroyed the supplies and reinforcements coming across the Channel, isolating the troops who had already been landed.

Thankfully, the invasion never came, but Britain was not the unprepared, shambolic country portrayed since the war. It was an incredibly powerful country with a huge empire and would meet any invasion with an effective and sound defensive strategy and utter brutality.



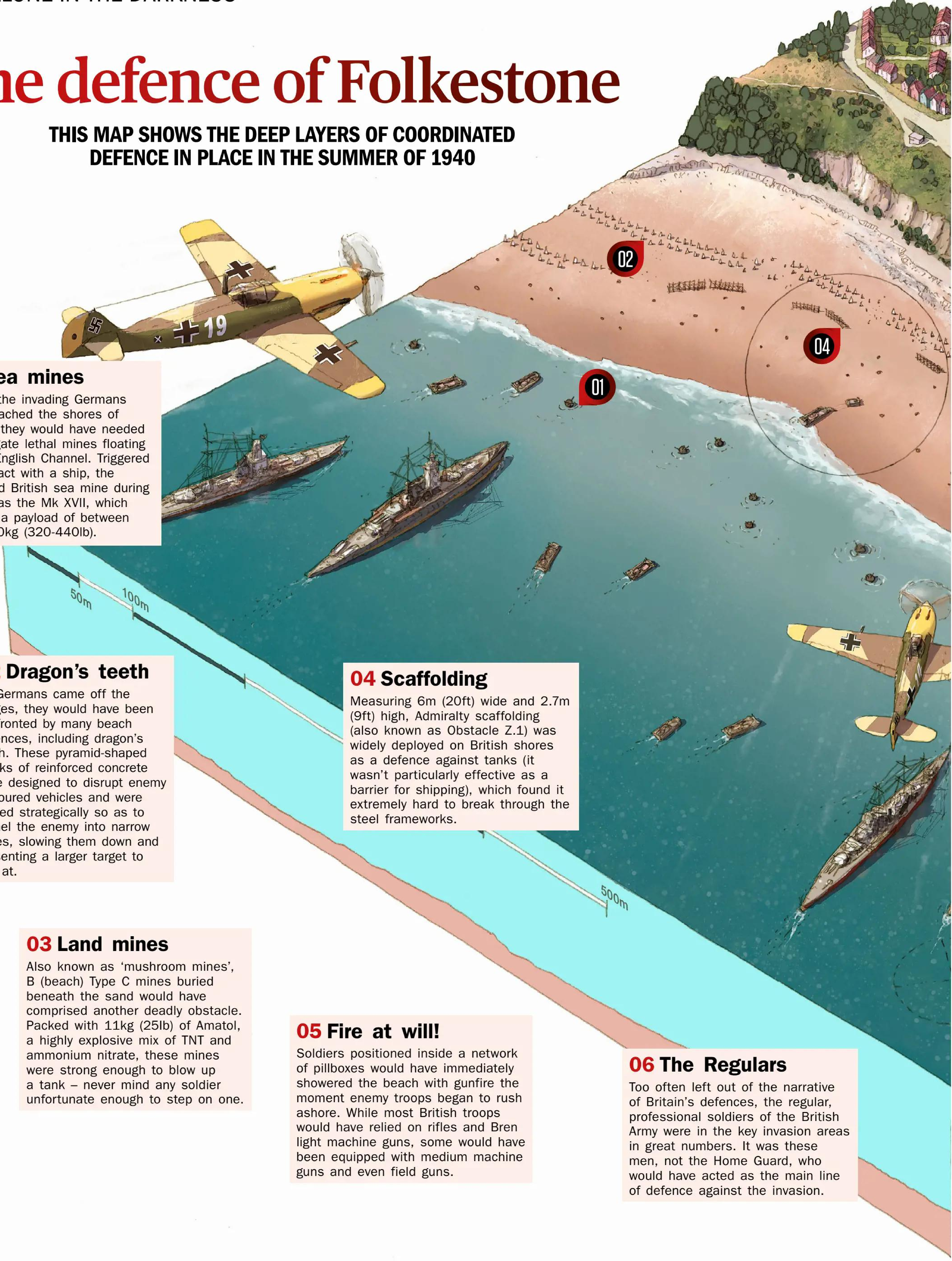
The secret Auxiliary Units would have undertaken a suicidal campaign of sabotage and guerrilla warfare to hold up the German advance

Pillboxes, seen today, perhaps confirm our perception of Britain in 1940, but in a wartime context they would have been part of a wider, joined-up and effective defence

The Home Guard's average age was around 35, with many having military experience. It was not Dad's Army!

The defence of Folkestone

THIS MAP SHOWS THE DEEP LAYERS OF COORDINATED DEFENCE IN PLACE IN THE SUMMER OF 1940



01 Sea mines

Before the invading Germans even reached the shores of Britain, they would have needed to navigate lethal mines floating in the English Channel. Triggered by contact with a ship, the standard British sea mine during WWII was the Mk XVII, which packed a payload of between 145-200kg (320-440lb).

02 Dragon's teeth

As Germans came off the barges, they would have been confronted by many beach defences, including dragon's teeth. These pyramid-shaped blocks of reinforced concrete were designed to disrupt enemy armoured vehicles and were placed strategically so as to funnel the enemy into narrow zones, slowing them down and presenting a larger target to aim at.

03 Land mines

Also known as 'mushroom mines', B (beach) Type C mines buried beneath the sand would have comprised another deadly obstacle. Packed with 11kg (25lb) of Amatol, a highly explosive mix of TNT and ammonium nitrate, these mines were strong enough to blow up a tank – never mind any soldier unfortunate enough to step on one.

04 Scaffolding

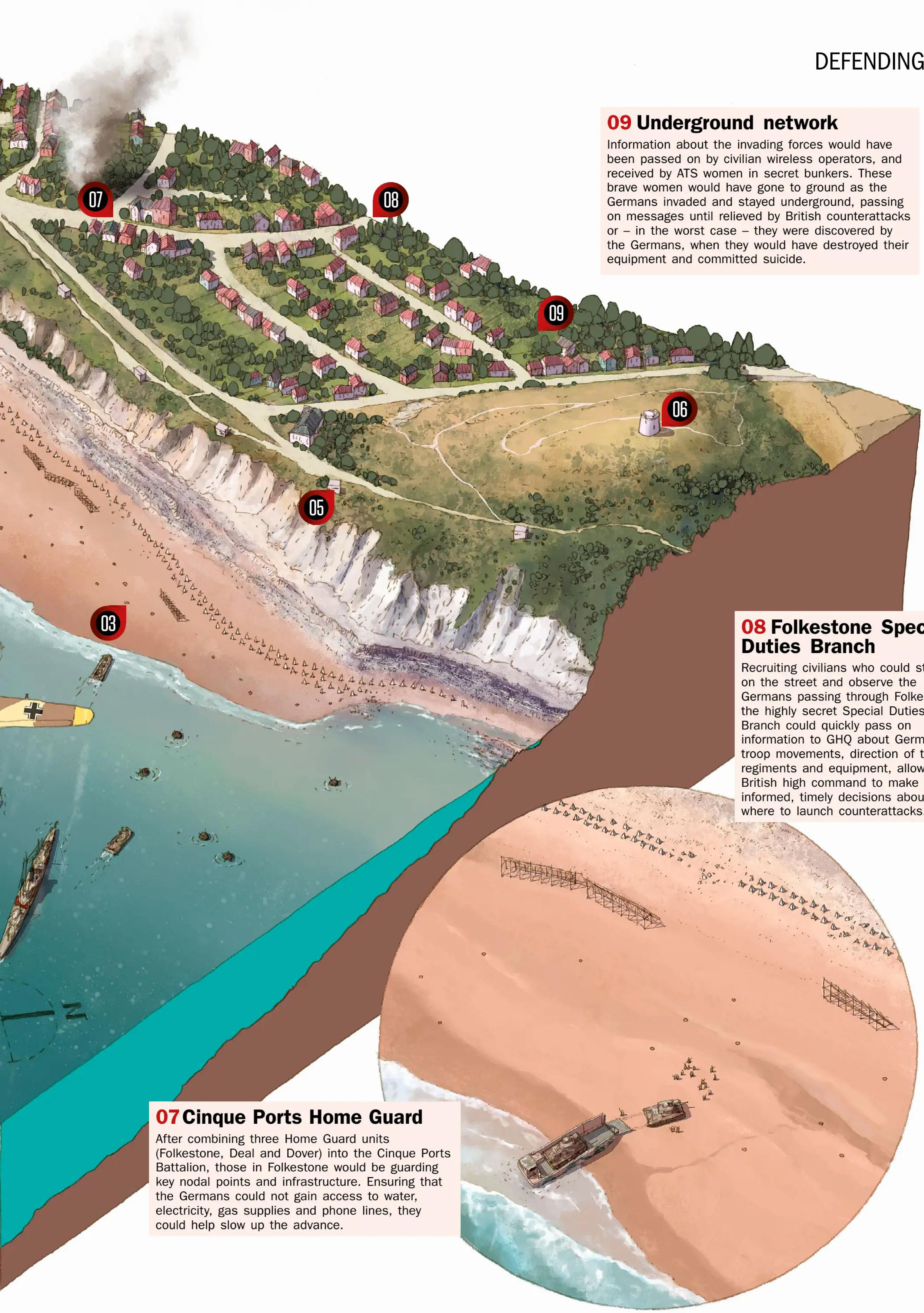
Measuring 6m (20ft) wide and 2.7m (9ft) high, Admiralty scaffolding (also known as Obstacle Z.1) was widely deployed on British shores as a defence against tanks (it wasn't particularly effective as a barrier for shipping), which found it extremely hard to break through the steel frameworks.

05 Fire at will!

Soldiers positioned inside a network of pillboxes would have immediately showered the beach with gunfire the moment enemy troops began to rush ashore. While most British troops would have relied on rifles and Bren light machine guns, some would have been equipped with medium machine guns and even field guns.

06 The Regulars

Too often left out of the narrative of Britain's defences, the regular, professional soldiers of the British Army were in the key invasion areas in great numbers. It was these men, not the Home Guard, who would have acted as the main line of defence against the invasion.



09 Underground network

Information about the invading forces would have been passed on by civilian wireless operators, and received by ATS women in secret bunkers. These brave women would have gone to ground as the Germans invaded and stayed underground, passing on messages until relieved by British counterattacks or – in the worst case – they were discovered by the Germans, when they would have destroyed their equipment and committed suicide.

08 Folkestone Special Duties Branch

Recruiting civilians who could stand on the street and observe the Germans passing through Folkestone, the highly secret Special Duties Branch could quickly pass on information to GHQ about German troop movements, direction of travel, regiments and equipment, allowing British high command to make informed, timely decisions about where to launch counterattacks.

07 Cinque Ports Home Guard

After combining three Home Guard units (Folkestone, Deal and Dover) into the Cinque Ports Battalion, those in Folkestone would be guarding key nodal points and infrastructure. Ensuring that the Germans could not gain access to water, electricity, gas supplies and phone lines, they could help slow up the advance.

Illustration: Rocío Espín Piñar

MAKING TRACKS

A column of Matilda II tanks roll through London as part of defensive manoeuvres conducted in the anticipation of a German invasion of Britain in June 1940. The only tank to serve right throughout the war, the Matilda boasted a 40mm (1.5in) gun and thick armour.

AND SON
THE 'REX' FOR
R
FLAKE
OFFICIAL AGENTS FOR B
OUR SPEC
ESS HOU
H

Image: Getty Images

CHANNEL ISLANDS:

LIFE UNDER THE NAZIS

For five long years, the Channel Islands were under Nazi occupation. This is the story of that time

WORDS **EDOARDO ALBERT**

The Swastika flag of Nazi Germany was to fly over the Channel Islands for nearly five years

Evacuation. That was the headline of the *Guernsey Star* on the evening of 19 June 1940. And below the stark headline it went on to say, "All children to be sent to mainland tomorrow. Whole bailiwick to be demilitarised."

Reading the story in the newspaper, the people of the Channel Islands suddenly realised that they were going to be left to the mercy of Nazi Germany.

Abandoned islands

Earlier that day, the chief of staff had presented a memorandum to Prime Minister Winston Churchill stating the Channel Islands were 'not of major strategic importance' and so should not be defended against the German attack.

The Channel Islands – Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and some smaller islands – lie at their closest only 23 kilometres (14 miles) from the coast of Normandy, but they are over 113 kilometres (70 miles) away from the south coast of England. As such, it was clearly impossible to defend them against the Germans, but Churchill was still loath to surrender British subjects without a fight. And here he was, being asked to surrender British subjects without a fight.

"The initial occupation was to be conducted with a relatively light touch – at least by Nazi standards"

But there was no choice. The British Army garrison on the Channel Islands was evacuated, as well as those young men who wanted to sign up to fight. But that left the question of what to do with the civilians.

Evacuation

"Arrangements are being made for the evacuation of (1) children of school age and (2) children under school age to reception centres in the United Kingdom if parents desire it." That was the story printed in the *Guernsey Evening Press* on the same day that the *Star*'s headline was "Island Evacuation". Parents literally had a few hours to decide; the first boats were sailing at dawn the next day. The majority of the children of Guernsey were evacuated (mothers with children under school age were allowed to accompany their children). On Jersey, most people stayed, children included. As for the smaller islands, almost all the inhabitants of Alderney left, but virtually all of the islanders on Sark were inspired by the redoubtable Sibyl Hathaway, Dame of Sark, to stay. As the Dame liked to put it, Sark was "the last bastion of feudalism" where she ruled as a benevolent dictator.

After the children, those adults who wanted to go were also allowed to leave. However, the government of Jersey opposed its citizens leaving. Alexander Coutanche, the bailiff of Jersey, told a crowd in St Helier's, "I will never leave, and my wife will be my side." In the end, only 6,600 of a population of 50,000 left. On Guernsey, the government put up posters saying, "Keep your heads! Don't be yellow!" – although the impact was lessened when people learned that the man who wrote the posters had himself left. In the end, more people left Guernsey: 17,000 of the island's pre-war population of 42,000.

Some evacuees decided, on arriving on the mainland, that they had made a terrible mistake. One woman, missing her husband dreadfully, managed to return to Guernsey only to learn that he had followed her. It would be five years before the couple was reunited.

Now, with the soldiers off the island and those who wanted to leave gone, it was a matter of waiting for the Germans to arrive.

Invasion

The Germans did not know that the British armed forces had abandoned the Channel Islands. On 28 June, a squadron of Heinkels bombed Jersey and Guernsey, concentrating their bombs on the harbours where lorries were waiting to load the tomato harvest onto ships. Forty-four islanders died during the attack.

In Berlin, the Nazi high command had made plans for a landing on the islands involving personnel from the Heer (army), Kriegsmarine (navy) and Luftwaffe (air force) but, in the event, the Luftwaffe jumped the gun. Having seen firsthand that there had been no resistance to their bombing raid, two Dorniers landed on Guernsey on 30 June, having circled above the airport for a while, waiting for the cattle browsing on the runway to move. Captain Reinhard Liebe-Piderit was the first member of the German armed forces to step onto British soil. He made his way to the terminal but then, hearing the sound of approaching planes, he raced back to his plane and took off – leaving in such haste that he forgot his pistol.

Later that evening, the Luftwaffe returned, landing a platoon of troops at Guernsey Airport. The Guernsey police took an officer to the house of Ambrose Sherwill, the island's bailiff. Seeing the officer standing outside his house, Sherwill asked the German to come in the side entrance.

"Why?" asked the German officer.

"My children are asleep in the hall," explained a concerned Sherwill.

"I would not think of disturbing your children," said the German officer.

A model occupation

The courtesy that the German officer showed Ambrose Sherwill was largely replicated on the other islands. Jersey was occupied on 1 July, Alderney on 2 July and Sark on 4 July. It was the summer of 1940 and the Channel Islands were now under German occupation.

With the Germans planning to invade Britain, their intention was to show, by their conduct, that the people on the mainland had nothing much to fear from Germany. The initial occupation was to be conducted with a relatively light touch – at least by Nazi standards. A curfew was imposed from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m., fishing boats could only go to sea with a permit and all weapons were to be handed in. More irritatingly for the islanders, the time was changed to Central European Time and cars had to drive on the right. But apart from that, businesses, shops and banks were to operate as normal, although legal tender was changed to scrips (occupation money).

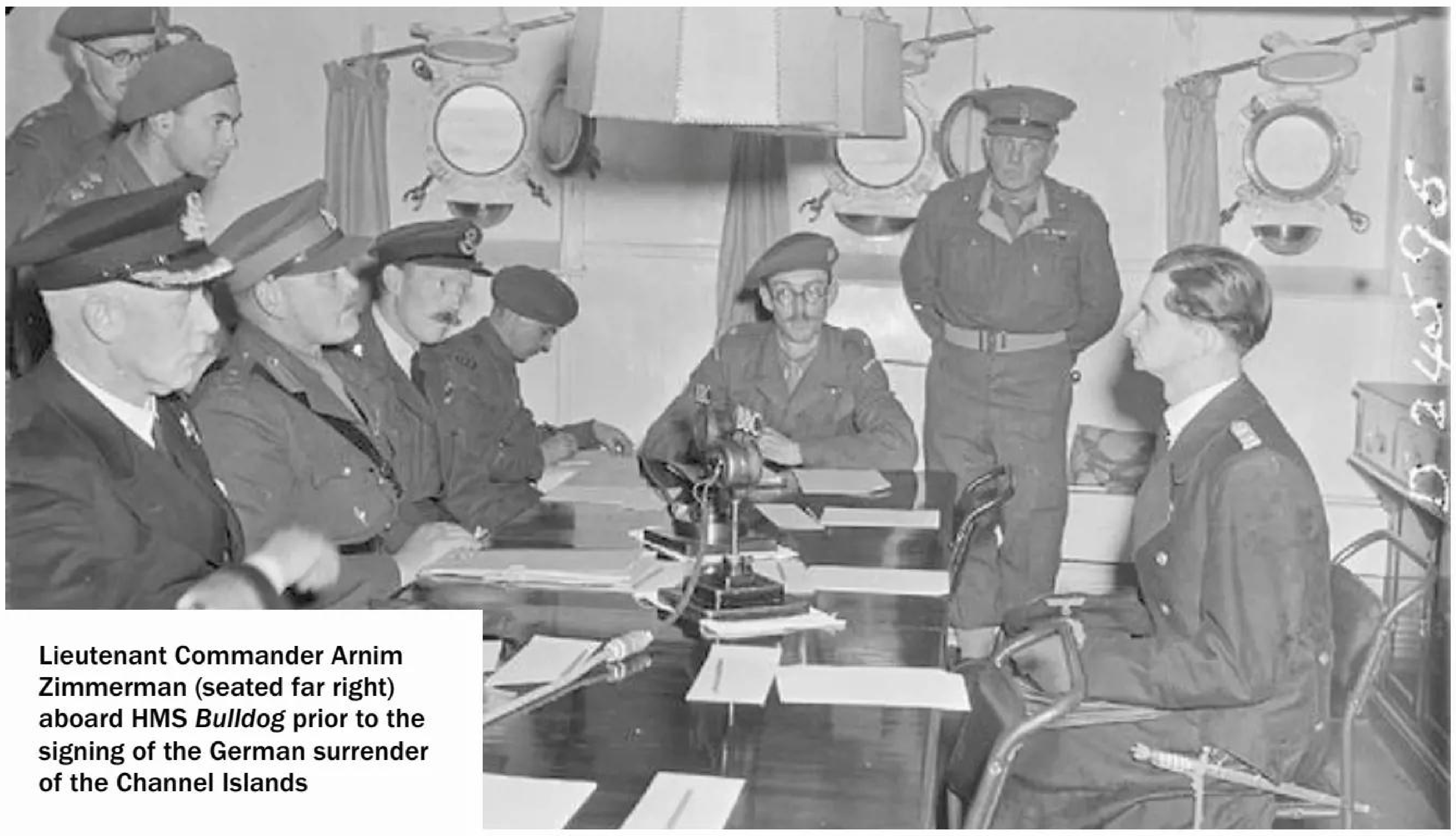
In general, the civil authorities under the bailiffs continued to manage local affairs, although major decisions had to be approved by the German authorities. Discipline among the occupying troops was excellent and there were few cases of theft, assault or damage. The German soldiers assigned to garrison the Channel Islands swiftly recognised that, compared to other theatres of the war, the Channel Islands were a sinecure and few of them did anything that would put them at risk of being transferred elsewhere – particularly, after 1941, the Eastern Front.

Fraternising with the enemy

The Islanders and the occupiers lived largely separate lives, although there was some limited fraternisation: Germans were permitted to attend island church services (at midnight mass one Christmas, a group of Germans sang an exquisite version of 'Silent Night' in its original German). With tens of thousands of young men stationed on islands from which almost all the local young men had gone, there were also, inevitably, some flirtations, seductions, romances and genuine love affairs. The young women entering into relationships with Germans did so either in secret or faced the disapproval of the locals, who labelled them 'Jerry bags'. A few women made calculated decisions to do so for the benefits, in terms of goods and services, that such relationships brought, but most were genuine romances.

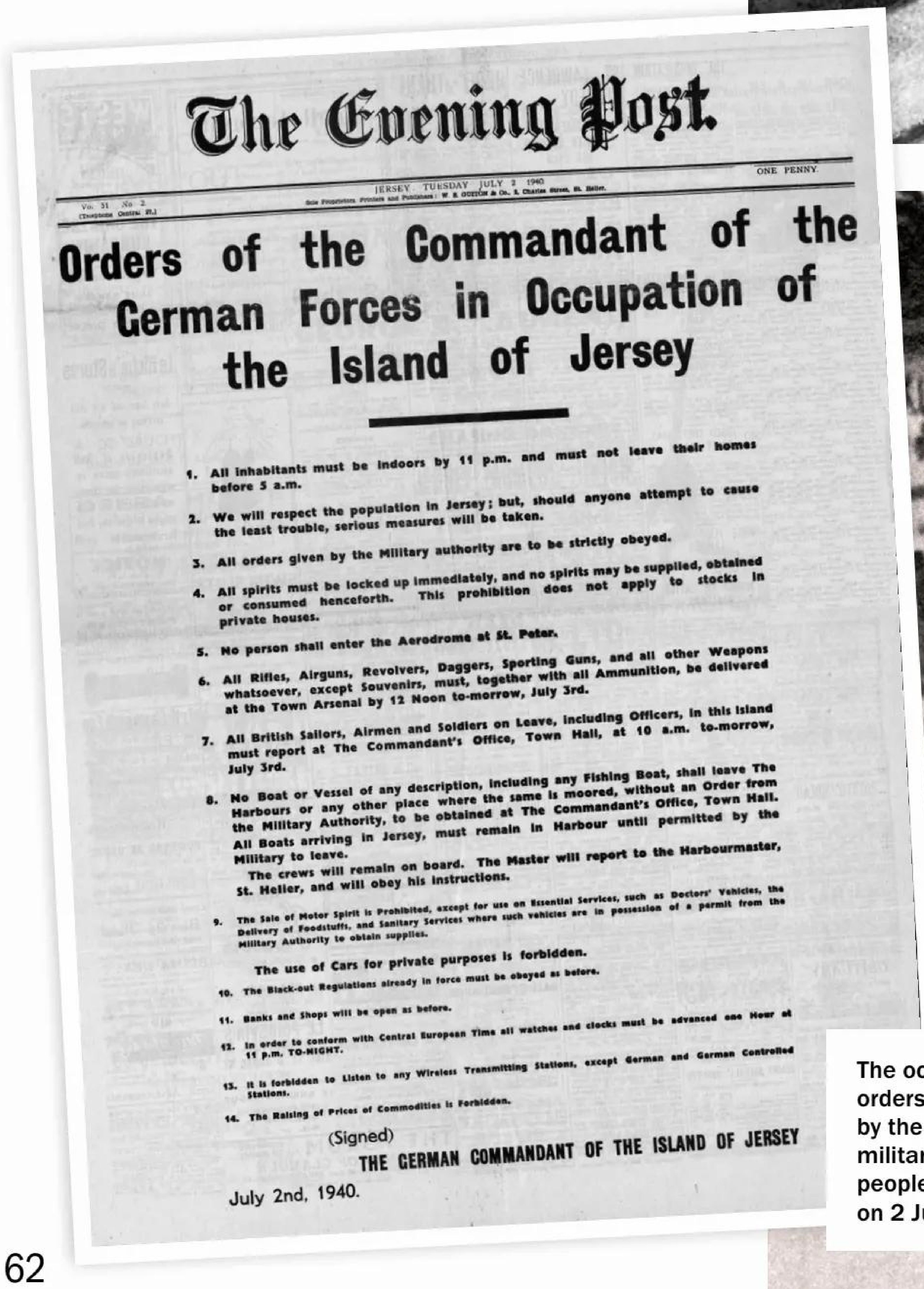
Slave labour

When it became clear, from 1941 onwards, that the war was not going to be over soon, the Germans began plans to turn the Channel Islands into island fortresses. To that end, they shipped over 16,000 labourers from mainland Europe to build fortifications. Some were paid labourers, more were conscripted, and most were prisoners from the Eastern Front. As such, they were treated much more brutally than the locals, having to subsist on starvation rations and facing cruel and sadistic punishments. The worst treatment was meted out to the slave labourers on Alderney. With the island having been evacuated, there was no one there to see what the Germans did to the men forced to build the fortifications on the island.



Lieutenant Commander Arnim Zimmerman (seated far right) aboard HMS *Bulldog* prior to the signing of the German surrender of the Channel Islands

Boots
DISPENSING CHEMISTS
Boots
TOILET SPECIALISTS
Boots



The Evening Post.

Vol. 51 No. 2

JERSEY TUESDAY JULY 2 1940

ONE PENNY

Orders of the Commandant of the German Forces in Occupation of the Island of Jersey

1. All inhabitants must be indoors by 11 p.m. and must not leave their homes before 5 a.m.
2. We will respect the population in Jersey; but, should anyone attempt to cause the least trouble, serious measures will be taken.
3. All orders given by the Military authority are to be strictly obeyed.
4. All spirits must be locked up immediately, and no spirits may be supplied, obtained or consumed henceforth. This prohibition does not apply to stocks in private houses.
5. No person shall enter the Aerodrome at St. Peter.
6. All Rifles, Airguns, Revolvers, Daggers, Sporting Guns, and all other Weapons whatsoever, except Souvenirs, must, together with all Ammunition, be delivered at the Town Arsenal by 12 Noon to-morrow, July 3rd.
7. All British Sailors, Airmen and Soldiers on Leave, including Officers, in this Island must report at The Commandant's Office, Town Hall, at 10 a.m. to-morrow, July 3rd.
8. No Boat or Vessel of any description, including any Fishing Boat, shall leave The Harbours or any other place where the same is moored, without an Order from the Military Authority, to be obtained at The Commandant's Office, Town Hall. All Boats arriving in Jersey, must remain in Harbour until permitted by the Military to leave.

   The crews will remain on board. The Master will report to the Harbourmaster, St. Helier, and will obey his instructions.
9. The Sale of Motor Spirit is Prohibited, except for use on Essential Services, such as Doctors' Vehicles, the Delivery of Foodstuffs, and Sanitary Services where such vehicles are in possession of a permit from the Military Authority to obtain supplies.

   The use of Cars for private purposes is forbidden.
10. The Black-out Regulations already in force must be obeyed as before.
11. Banks and Shops will be open as before.
12. In order to conform with Central European Time all watches and clocks must be advanced one Hour at 11 p.m. TO-NIGHT.
13. It is forbidden to Listen to any Wireless Transmitting Stations, except German and German Controlled Stations.
14. The Raising of Prices of Commodities is Forbidden.

(Signed)
THE GERMAN COMMANDANT OF THE ISLAND OF JERSEY

July 2nd, 1940.

The occupation orders issued by the German military to the people of Jersey on 2 July 1940

> *"The islanders, though, started to bring out their long-stored Union Jack flags"*

But even on the bigger islands, conditions were brutal. Some of the prisoners escaped. Seeing their desperation, many local people hid them. Jersey shopkeeper Louisa Gould sheltered an escaped Russian airman, Feodor Buryi, in her house for nearly two years until betrayed by informers. However, Gould managed to get Buryi to safety before the German military police raided her home. There the military police found evidence that Gould had been sheltering a prisoner as well as a radio, possession of which was forbidden. Gould and her brother, Harold Le Druillenec, were sentenced to long prison terms. Both were sent to prisons in France, but then Gould was transferred to Ravensbrück concentration camp and Le Druillenec to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. On 13 February 1945, two months before the Allies reached the camp, Gould was murdered in the gas chamber at Ravensbrück. Le Druillenec, however, survived the horrors of Bergen-Belsen and returned home to Jersey.

Feodor Buryi, the man they had sacrificed so much to save, managed to remain ahead of the German occupiers and survived the war. He eventually returned to the Soviet Union, although there he remained under KGB surveillance for many years.

The hunger winter

On 6 June 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy. The islanders were quietly jubilant, thinking that liberation was close at hand. But faced with formidable fortifications and a large German garrison, the Allies decided to simply bypass the islands. As Churchill said, "Let 'em starve. No fighting. They can rot at their leisure." He was referring to the German garrison, but as 1944 dragged on, the islanders must have thought he was talking about them: with supplies from the mainland cut off, people began to literally starve to death.

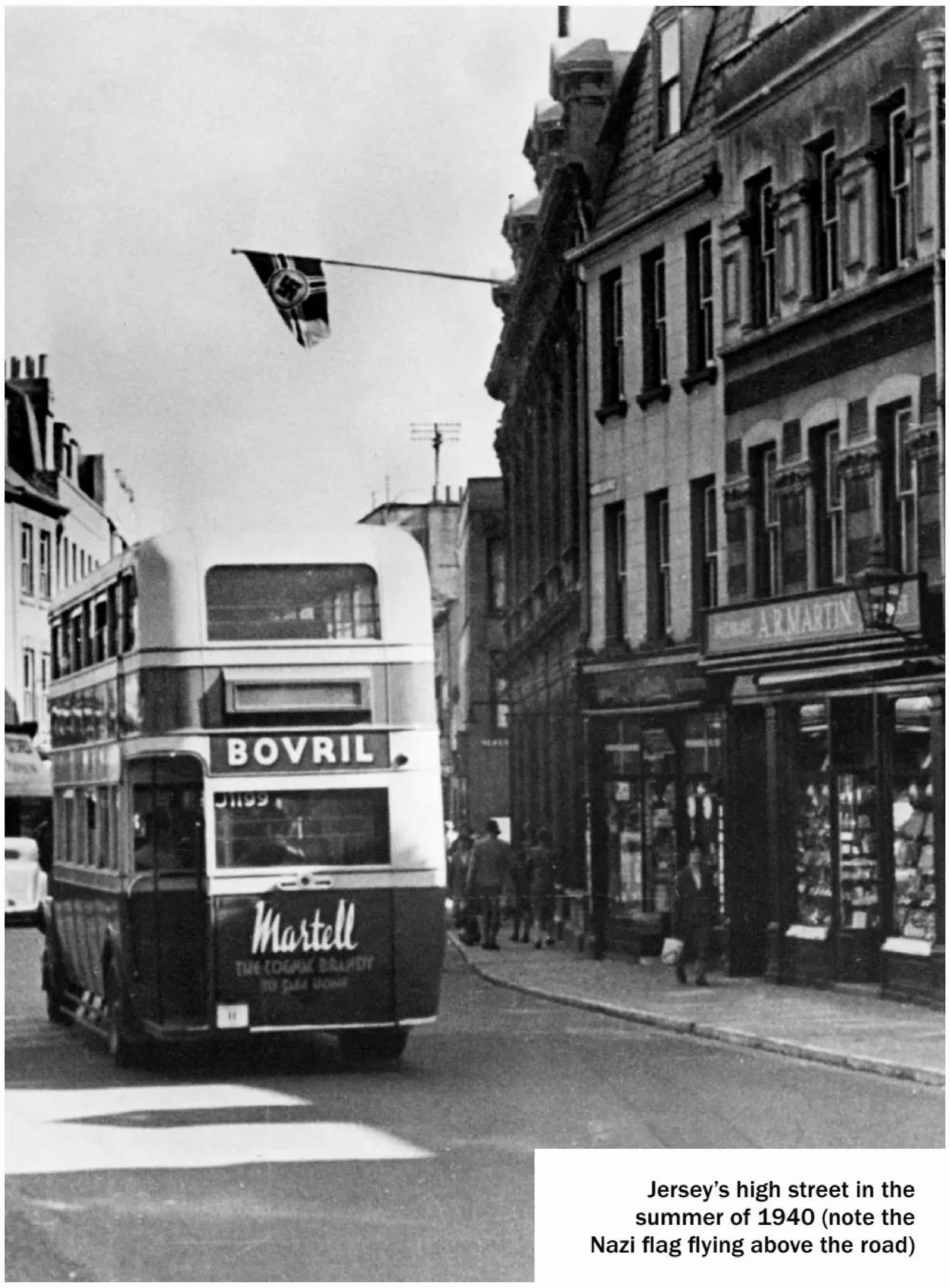
Learning of the dire situation on the islands, the British authorities, with German co-operation, arranged for the Red Cross to bring emergency food parcels to the islands. On 27 December 1944, the SS *Vega* docked in Guernsey, moving on to Jersey by 31 December, unloading nearly 120,000 food parcels. With their Red Cross parcels, the islanders suddenly found themselves in the unlikely position of being better provisioned than their German occupiers. However, despite their privations, the Germans very largely retained their discipline: there were almost no reports of looting or theft of food parcels.

Liberation day

On 26 February 1945, Vizeadmiral Friedrich Hüffmeier took over as the commander of the German occupying force. A fanatical Nazi, Hüffmeier was determined to hold out, even when it was clear that the situation was hopeless. Knowing this, a group of German officers were on the point of assassinating Hüffmeier (apparently by poisoning the hot milk he enjoyed drinking daily) when the news came through that Hitler was dead. The mutiny was called off. It was clear that everything was over.

However, Hüffmeier still would not surrender without official orders (he dispatched 19-year-old Armin Zimmerman to discuss armistice terms with the British in a move that was likely a delaying tactic). The islanders, though, started to bring out their long-stored Union Jack flags and began flying them. On 8 May 1945, the war in Europe ended. A day later, HMS *Bulldog* arrived in Guernsey to accept the unconditional surrender of the German occupiers; HMS *Beagle* accepted the German surrender on Jersey. The German garrison on Sark surrendered on 10 May and the one on Alderney on 16 May 1945. The nearly five years of occupation was over.

Some of the children evacuated from the Channel Islands trying on shoes sent by well-wishers from America



Jersey's high street in the summer of 1940 (note the Nazi flag flying above the road)

THE DOGFIGHT BEGINS

Master of Europe, only one thing stood between Hitler and total control of the continent: the RAF

WORDS **EDOARDO ALBERT**

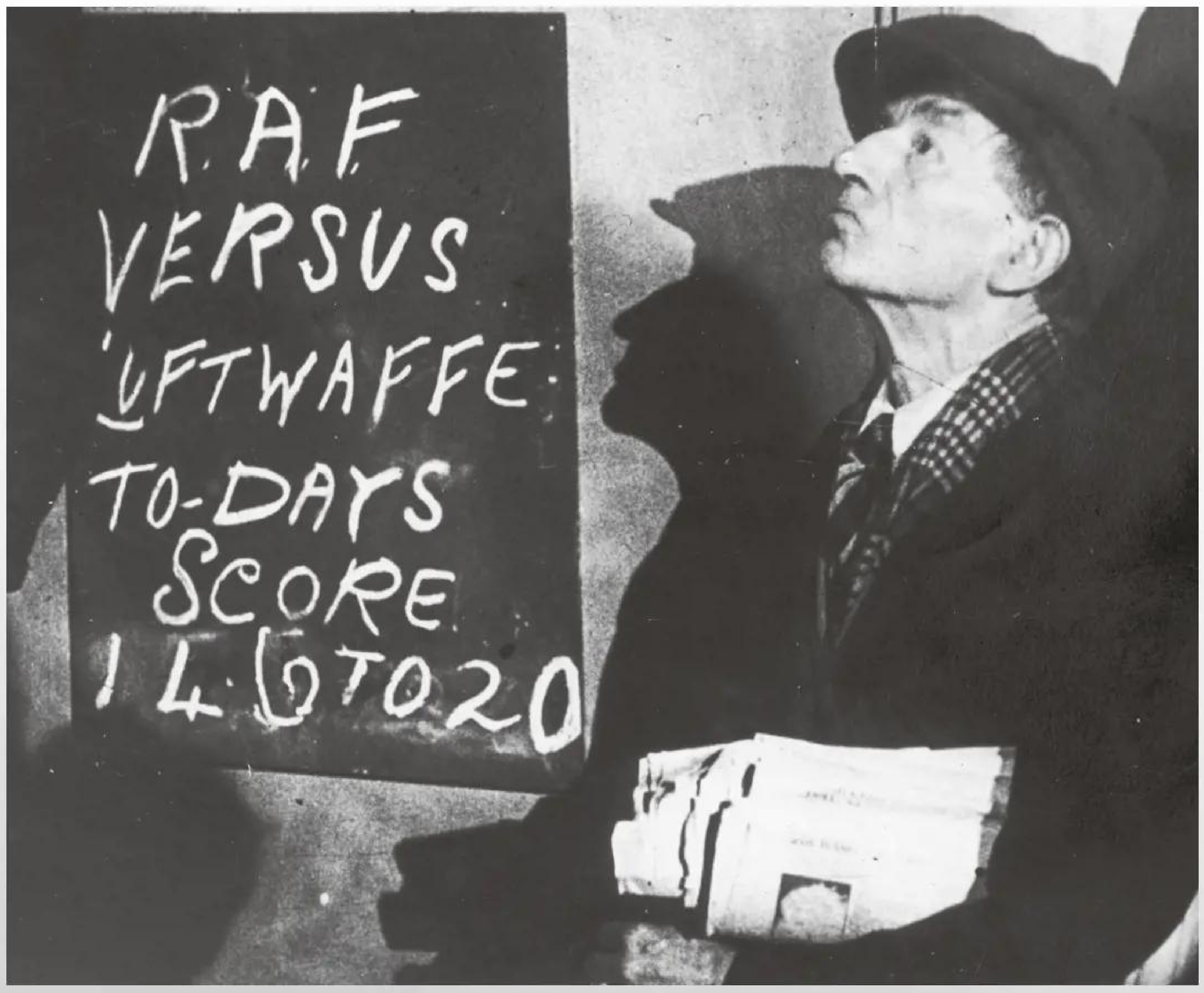
There are very few battles that are named before being fought, but the battle over the skies of Britain in the summer and autumn of 1940 was one of them. On 18 June 1940, Winston Churchill, who had been prime minister for just over a month, gave a speech to the House of Commons in response to the calamitous events in France. Seeing the collapse of French resistance, Churchill warned that "the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation."

He was right. But, unusually perhaps, the other participant in the battle did not expect to have to fight it. Adolf Hitler was convinced that, faced with the defeat of their French allies and the overwhelming success achieved by the German armed forces, the British would sue for peace. Since the Führer was sure of this, the German military had devoted very little thought to what to do if the British did not want peace. While the Wehrmacht and Kriegsmarine worked on the plan that would become Operation Sea Lion, on 30 June Hermann Göring, Reichsmarschall and commander of the Luftwaffe, ordered his planes to begin the air war against Britain. The German high command agreed that a necessary prerequisite for a seaborne invasion of Britain would be air superiority; securing it would deny the Royal Air Force the opportunity to attack the vulnerable landing craft that would ferry the German Army across the Channel and give the Luftwaffe a free hand to destroy the Royal Navy as it sought to turn back the invasion. The orders in Göring's General Directive mandated small-scale bomber raids escorted by fighters on the British mainland, while the main immediate effort was to attack shipping in the Channel, closing it off to the Royal Navy. These probing attacks served to familiarise German air crews with the navigation and geography involved while allowing the Luftwaffe to test the strengths and weaknesses of the RAF and give exhausted air men the chance to rest.

For the RAF and its commander, Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, the chief concern was

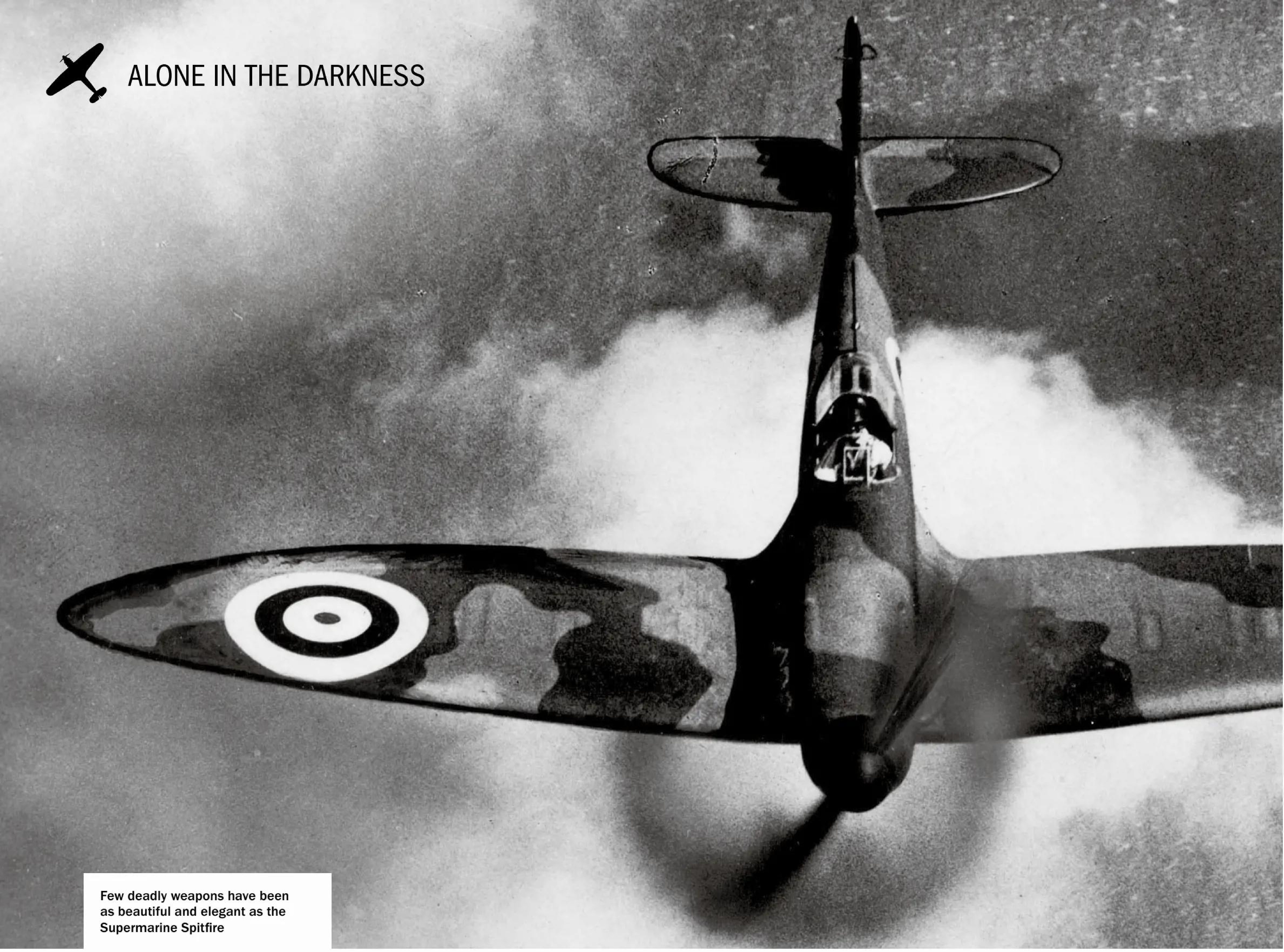
the numbers: the Germans had substantially more planes than the RAF. It was clear that, for all the individual heroics, this would be a battle of attrition: victory would go to the side that could bleed the enemy of its pilots and planes quicker. In that the RAF started at an obvious disadvantage as the Germans began the battle with more pilots. However, Dowding had created an integrated defence system that coordinated early warnings from the string of radar stations along the coast with the reports from the Observer Corps, sending these via telephone to the sector stations, which plotted the incoming attacks on a large table with wooden blocks indicating the estimated strength of the raid while arrows showed the direction of flight. On a balcony overlooking the operations table was a group of about eight men, including the senior controller, responsible for issuing orders to the waiting RAF squadrons, directing them to intercept the incoming German attacks.

The official date for the start of the Battle of Britain is 10 July. For four long days, the RAF and the Luftwaffe engaged in bitter aerial battles over the Channel and the coast of Britain as



The perfect weather of summer 1940 meant that civilians on the ground followed the battle as closely as the men fighting in the sky above

“Scramble!” The RAF pilots of 601 Squadron, based at Tangmere, run to their waiting Hurricanes. Victory often went to those who had the height: the quicker they could take off and the higher they could get, the better their chances



Few deadly weapons have been as beautiful and elegant as the Supermarine Spitfire

‘Sailor’ in the sky

RAF ACE ‘SAILOR’ MALAN TRANSFORMED THE RAF’S TACTICS DURING AND AFTER THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

It’s perhaps not surprising that Adolph Malan was better known by his nickname ‘Sailor’, which he had acquired from a maritime career brought to an end by the Great Depression. Turning to flying, the South African enlisted in the RAF in 1936 and was quickly recognised as an outstanding officer. Malan took part in the Battle of France, his squadron helping to provide cover for the retreating British forces, with Malan himself chalking up three victories.

Back in Britain, Malan was heavily engaged in the fighting over the Channel in July, claiming further victories, and he was promoted to the command of 74 Squadron on 8 August. At 30, Malan was older than most of his pilots and brought a calm analysis to RAF tactics: in particular, he abandoned the tight, three-aircraft flying V formation for the ‘finger-four’ formation, which afforded far more flexibility.

In addition, Malan compiled ten rules for air fighting that quickly circulated through the RAF, providing new pilots with a basic tactical awareness for the battles ahead. Of the ten, perhaps the most often repeated for rookies was number 7: never fly straight and level for more than 30 seconds in the combat area. Malan’s rules became the bible for training RAF pilots.

Suffering combat weariness, Malan was transferred to flight training in July 1941, where he passed on his skills to the next generation of pilots. He ended the war with 32 confirmed victories and returned to South Africa, becoming an active opponent of Apartheid. He died in 1963 at the age of 53 from Parkinson’s disease.

> *“Malan’s ten rules of air fighting became the bible for training RAF pilots”*

Sailor Malan sitting in the cockpit of his Spitfire at RAF Biggin Hill

"Göring insisted that German fighter planes be used offensively to seek and destroy RAF fighters rather than as escorts for bombing missions"

formations of battle-hardened and confident German fighter pilots sought to sweep the RAF from the air. Attacks were mounted on convoys, ports and aircraft factories by German bomber formations while fighter groups sought to destroy the British fighters meeting these attacks.

With many of these dogfights taking place over water, a lot depended on the efficiency of air-sea rescue to pick up pilots who had bailed out. In this the Germans had a distinct advantage, with dedicated sea planes patrolling for downed aircraftmen that were able to land on the water and rescue survivors: the RAF relied on passing sea traffic to find and fish out their pilots and, as a result, many men who might otherwise have survived were lost. Overall, though, during these four days of intense combat, the RAF lost 29 fighters while the Luftwaffe had 40 planes shot down. But that was not what the respective air forces thought at the time.

In the heat of battle, it was easy for a pilot to see oil and smoke trailing from his target and, with the plane heading downwards, to claim the target as a confirmed kill and turn away to stop himself becoming a target too, only for the pilot to regain control of his stricken plane and nurse it home. The result was that both sides grossly overestimated the number of enemy planes their pilots had shot down. This had a profound effect on the psychology of the battle because it fed into the estimates of the enemy strength each side had.

German intelligence had underestimated the initial strength of the RAF. When this belief in the paucity of forces commanded by the RAF was coupled with overestimates of the number of RAF planes they had shot down, the Luftwaffe commanders became initially convinced that victory was very near, only to be confounded when the RAF continued to send squadrons up to intercept their attacks: according to German intelligence, the RAF should by that stage have been down to just a handful of planes.

The British had better initial estimates of Luftwaffe strength plus the incalculable benefit of having cracked the German 'Enigma' code, thus allowing the code-breakers at Bletchley Park to read encrypted German messages. While analysis has shown that this had little operational effect on the outcome of the Battle of Britain, it afforded the British a better idea of German intentions and strength.

By 16 July, Hitler had realised that the British were not going to negotiate a peace treaty. He duly issued Directive 16, ordering his military high command to prepare for the invasion of Britain. The directive had four preconditions, the most important being that the RAF be rendered incapable of opposing the invasion. In response Hermann Göring ordered his commanders to prepare for *Adlerangriff* (Eagle Attack), an air offensive designed to sweep the RAF from the sky. To facilitate this Göring insisted that German fighter planes, the Bf 109 and twin-engined Bf 110, be used offensively to seek and destroy RAF fighters rather than as escorts for bombing missions. Little did the Reichsmarschall realise that some of his most trusted commanders would not follow this order, preferring to use the fighter planes to escort the vulnerable bombers, with fatal results for the German offensive.

The Luftwaffe gradually intensified its attacks in the days leading up to Adlerangriff, which was scheduled for 10 August. Both sides were learning rapidly. The RAF, which had early on relied on very tight fighter formations, with the planes' wings almost touching, realised that the looser formations used by the Luftwaffe were far superior, allowing the pilots to support each other while not requiring them to remain so focused on not hitting the plane next to them as to make it difficult to maintain awareness of 'bandits' lurking above: in a dogfight, the plane that had the altitude had a huge advantage.

The RAF's tactical doctrine was for the more nimble and faster Spitfires to engage the Luftwaffe fighter planes while the more heavily armed Hurricanes broke up the bomber formations. In practice, this rarely worked to plan. Meanwhile, the Luftwaffe was starting to realise the importance of the string of radar stations along the south coast. The first wave of attacks on Adlerangriff were to be aimed at these radar stations before moving inland and

The agile Supermarine Spitfire would prove vital to the RAF's hopes of intercepting German fighter planes

> “In the metal-streaked skies over Britain, one moment of hesitation could be a pilot’s last”

attacking RAF bases and command stations: the strategy was aimed at luring the RAF into a battle it had no choice but to fight and destroying it in the skies above southern England. With the inherent advantage the RAF had of fighting over home ground (pilots who baled out could be flying again the same day, whereas German pilots found themselves prisoners for the rest of the war), it was the strategy most likely to achieve Göring’s aim of destroying the RAF.

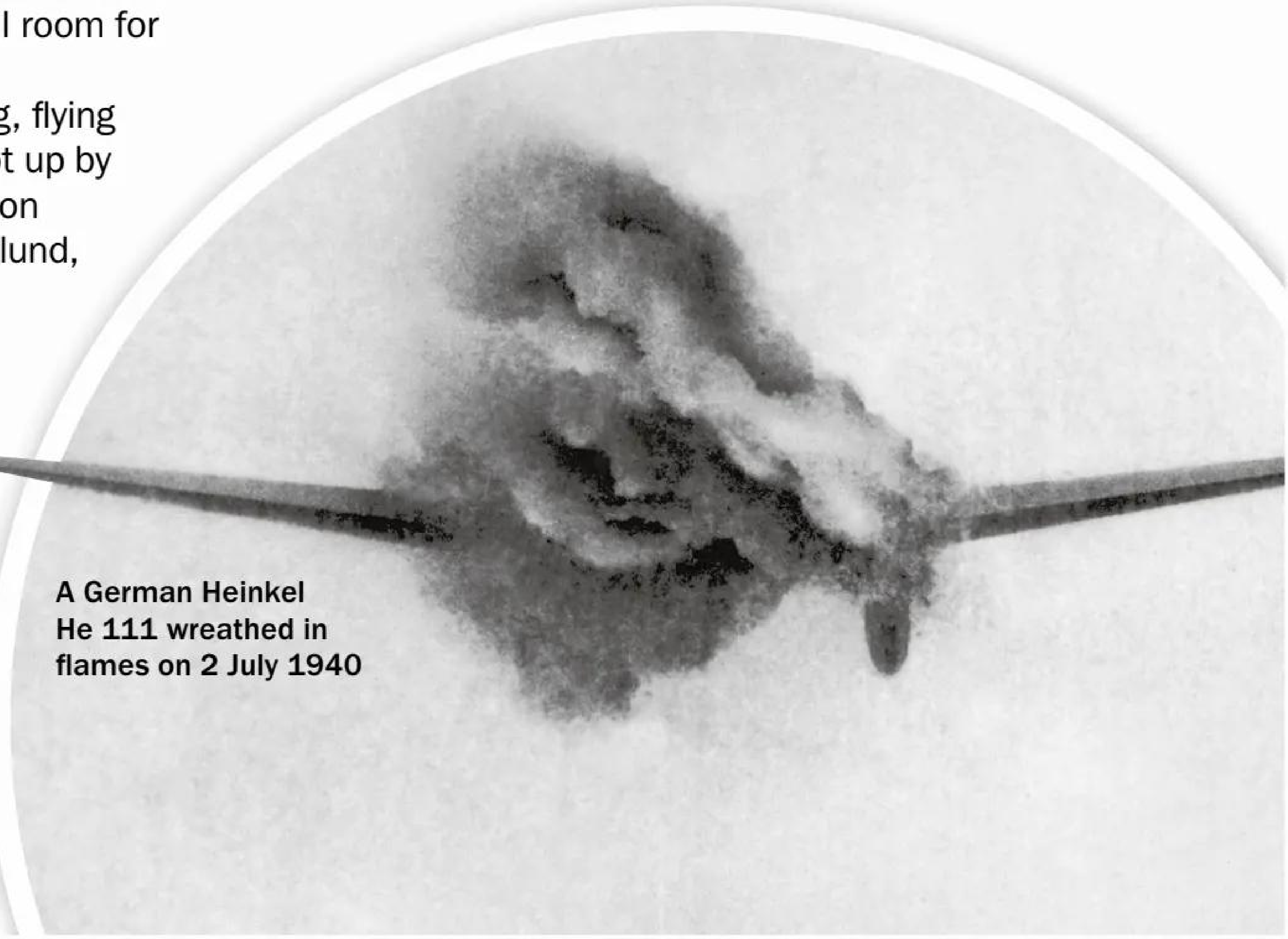
Adlerangriff was delayed by bad weather until 13 August. *Adlertag* (Eagle Day) followed the first attempt, on 12 August, to knock out RAF radar stations; the tall iron towers proved largely impervious to bombs but the Luftwaffe high command did not realise that attacks on the infrastructure – power lines, telephone cables – that allowed the radar stations to operate could have put them out of action. But as the German strategy was to lure the RAF into combat, it was thought that there was little operational reason to continue the attacks. The hammer instead fell on the air fields of 11 Group, commanded by Air Chief Marshal Keith Park, which was responsible for the defence of South East England and London and, as such, bore the brunt of Luftwaffe attacks. Park, a New Zealander, was in command of the day-to-day – indeed hour-by-hour – defence of the country, coordinating 11 Group’s response from the Group Operations Room at RAF Uxbridge.

On 15 August, the Luftwaffe launched the most attacks of the entire battle; thinking the RAF was entirely committed to the defence of the South East, German planes attacked the north of England, only to be shot down in large numbers. In fact, Dowding and Park had a policy of rotating squadrons to quieter sectors to rest and regroup: these resting squadrons administered such serious losses to Luftflotte 5 that it took no further serious part in the battle. But among all the killing there was still room for acts of mercy.

German bomber ace Joachim Helbig, flying a Junkers 88, had his plane badly shot up by a Hurricane flown by Pilot Officer Gordon Cleaver, only for his gunner, Franz Schlund, to take out the Hurricane as it was closing in for the kill. Cleaver baled out and landed near Winchester; his eyes seriously damaged by Perspex shards from his shattered cockpit, Cleaver retired from flying. As for Helbig and his Ju 88, the plane was severely damaged and two of the four-man crew seriously injured. Could he nurse the plane back to base? Then, almost miraculously, the sky seemed to suddenly clear of all aircraft. Sensing an opportunity, Helbig turned his plane south, beginning to relax once they were over the Channel.

“Spitfire!” The warning came from rear-gunner Schlund, but with his ammunition exhausted there was nothing he could do. Helbig tried to lose the Spitfire but could not shake the faster and more manoeuvrable fighter. Resigned to their fate, Helbig and his crew waited for the rattle of bullets. It never came. Instead the Spitfire drew up alongside them, its pilot looking in at the enemy. Amazingly, the Spitfire proceeded to escort Helbig’s plane back across the Channel. Then, with the coast approaching, the pilot waved a salute and turned away, allowing a relieved Helbig to nurse his crippled plane back to base. He never discovered the identity of the merciful pilot who chose to spare a hopelessly exposed enemy.

The crew of a Bf 110 downed in the Channel evacuate the aircraft before it sinks. German air-sea rescue was significantly superior to that of the RAF, with dedicated sea planes able to land and pick up downed airmen from the water



A German Heinkel He 111 wreathed in flames on 2 July 1940

The formidable Messerschmitt Bf 109. There was very little to choose between the 109 and the Supermarine Spitfire: it usually came down to pilot skill and luck

The Battle of the Channel

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN TOOK PLACE OVER THE COLD WATERS OF THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Following the Luftwaffe's first exploratory raids, what became known as the 'Channel Offensive' started at the beginning of July. It enjoyed immediate success: attacks on the 14-ship convoy OA 178 sank four vessels and seriously damaged five more without German loss. The notorious Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers proved particularly effective against shipping with their precision bomb delivery. As a result of this and other attacks, the Admiralty directed most convoys around the north of Scotland rather than risking 'bomb alley' along the Channel.

However, Churchill was not willing to cede the Channel to the Germans and requested that Dowding provide fighter cover for any convoy making its way through the narrow channel. The skirmishes between the RAF and the Luftwaffe were furious and deadly: one particularly memorable encounter saw New Zealander Alan Deere of 54 Squadron playing a deadly game of chicken with a Bf 109. Neither pilot would turn away – thus exposing his plane to raking fire from the enemy – with the result that the two planes hit each other. The propeller and cockpit of Deere's Spitfire were struck by the passing Messerschmitt and his engine failed. But Deere managed to glide back to the RAF base at Manston where he crash-landed. His plane then caught fire, but Deere broke free from his cockpit and escaped with only minor burns.

Credited with 22 kills by the end of the war, Deere was shot down on nine occasions but survived each time, clambering back into a new plane and continuing the fight.

Alan Deere (far right) talks to his station commander, Sailor Malan (left), at RAF Biggin Hill in 1943. By this stage of the war Deere was a wing leader, commanding RAF patrols deep into enemy-held Europe and providing fighter cover for bombing missions

Such acts of kindness, while heartening, were indeed rare. In the metal-streaked skies over Britain, one moment of hesitation could be a pilot's last. As Helbig's battered plane stuttered its way back to France, further bloodshed loomed on the horizon.

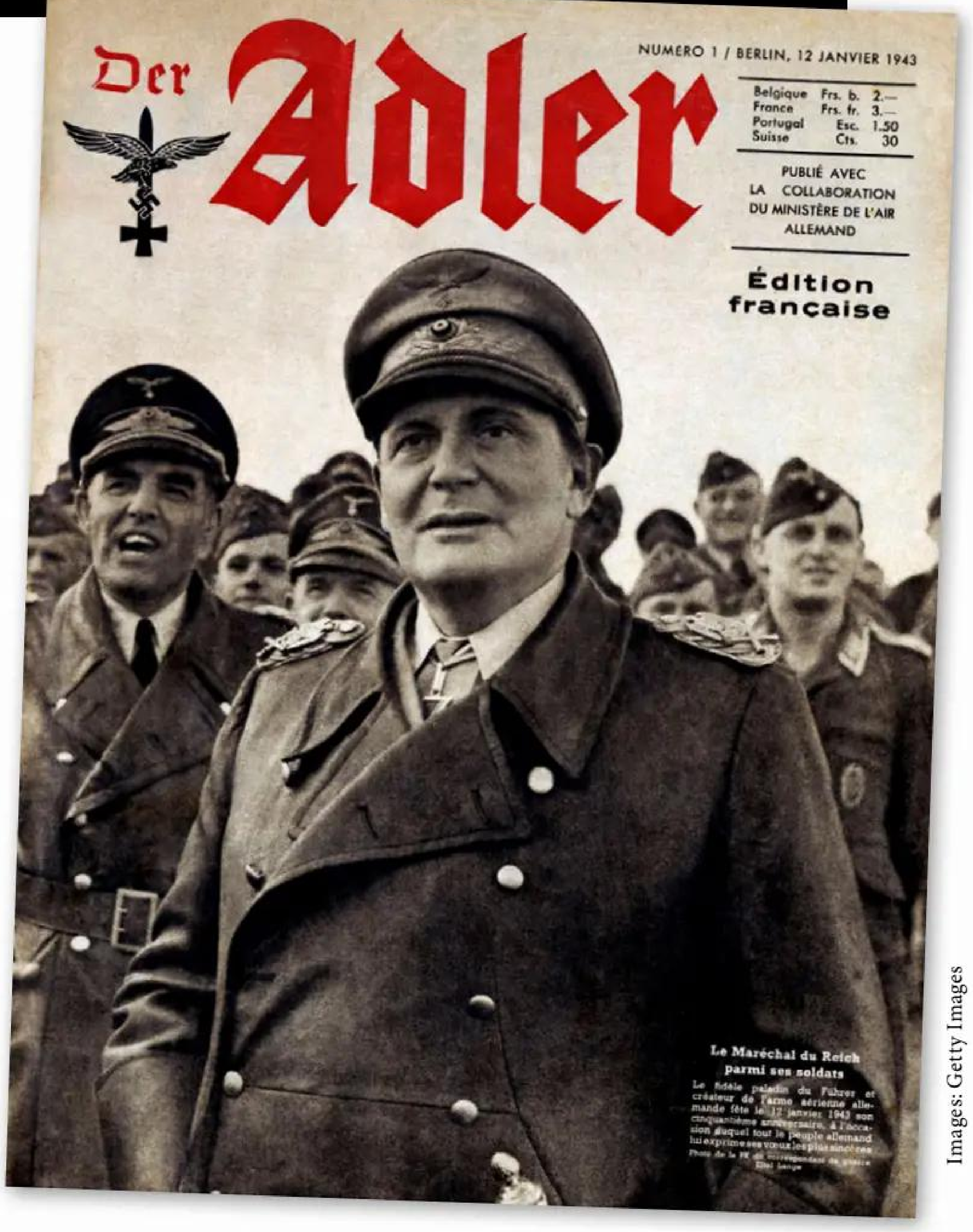
Adlerangriff culminated on 18 August with a day of attrition for both sides in which the RAF and Luftwaffe suffered the most single-day casualties of the campaign – and both sides again completely overestimated how many enemy aircraft they had destroyed while under-reporting their own losses. RAF losses were, in fact, 30 planes with ten pilots killed, while the Luftwaffe lost 71 planes with over 90 aircrew killed and 40 captured.

The weather then intervened, stopping large-scale action for a week and allowing the two commands to assess the outcome of the last few days of battle. The analysis was galling for Göring: his Ju 87 Stuka dive bombers had suffered such severe losses that they were withdrawn from the battle. Since 8 August, the Luftwaffe had lost nearly 350 planes – far more damage than he had expected the RAF to be able to inflict. The battle was not going as he had planned.

Committed to his strategy to draw RAF fighters into the air so that his planes could shoot them down, on 23 August, Göring ordered attacks on aircraft factories and RAF facilities. A wave of planes targeted Park's 11 Group airfields, knocking several out of action for a while; RAF Manston, on the tip of Kent, was particularly badly hit. Dowding's integrated control structure began to creak, and by the end of August, Göring's tactics of sending huge numbers of fighters in continuous waves was starting to pay off.

To offset its losses, the RAF called up replacement pilots from the Fleet Air Arm and emigré squadrons of Poles and Czechs, among them the Poles of 303 Squadron. On 30 August, the pilots of the squadron were training with their British squadron leader when Pilot Officer Ludwik Paszkiewicz, seeing action in the distance, set off to join in, shooting down a German plane. He later claimed that his radio set was not working, which was why he had not obeyed his squadron leader's order to return.

The next day 303 Squadron went into action, and their courageous contribution to the battle would be needed in the brutal weeks ahead. Göring, with his reputation on the line, not to mention victory, was determined to crush the RAF once and for all. The struggle for Britain's skies would continue until the end of October, when Germany was forced to admit defeat.


Der Adler

NUMERO 1 / BERLIN, 12 JANVIER 1943

Belgique Frs. b. 2.—
France Frs. fr. 3.—
Portugal Esc. 1.50
Suisse Cts. 30

PUBLIÉ AVEC LA COLLABORATION DU MINISTÈRE DE L'AIR ALLEMAND

Édition française

Le Maréchal du Reich parmi ses soldats

Göring was far from being the buffoon portrayed in films. If his subordinates had followed his strategy more closely and Hitler not insisted on moving the focus of the attack to London, he might have succeeded in destroying the RAF

Images: Getty Images

THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

The women who risked their lives, protected the nation and blasted social norms

WORDS **FRANCES WHITE**

The Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) first came into being along with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in April 1918. However, by 1920 it was disbanded along with the other women's services. It was not until June 1939, when WWII seemed inevitable, that the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) was formally established by King George VI. The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) had previously existed as the female equivalent of the Territorial Army, but the motive behind the creation of the WAAF was that a separate women's air service was needed. It was not a totally independent service but rather interlinked to the RAF so women could be brought in to replace RAF personnel when required. Recruitment for the WAAF was not just from Britain; many overseas women also joined the organisation, and local recruitment took place in the Middle East from 1942, including recruits from the Egyptian, Palestinian, Greek and Cypriot communities.

The roles of women recruited into the WAAF initially consisted of clerks, kitchen orderlies and drivers. This allowed men previously fulfilling these roles to instead be moved to front-line duties. These roles were generally seen as more acceptable for women due to their domestic nature. The ability of women to fulfil more mentally taxing roles was doubted from the start of the WAAF's formation. However, as the war progressed and situations became more dire, the strain the RAF was under led them to place women in roles previously thought unfathomable, including telephony, telegraphy and intercepting codes and ciphers. Women also entered the male-dominated worlds of mechanics and engineering.

A common posting for WAAF members was to work in the radar control systems as reporters and plotters. Several roles, however, were unavailable to women, such as actually serving as a pilot, although women did fly military aircraft in the capacity of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). Over 150 women flew with the ATA during the war, delivering new planes from factories to RAF units and taking planes back for repairs. Because the RAF thought it unacceptable for women pilots to fly military aircraft, all ATA female members were civilians. The under secretary of state of air, Lord Balfour, later commented that "the Air Transport Auxiliary were civilians in uniforms who played a soldier's part in the Battle for Britain".

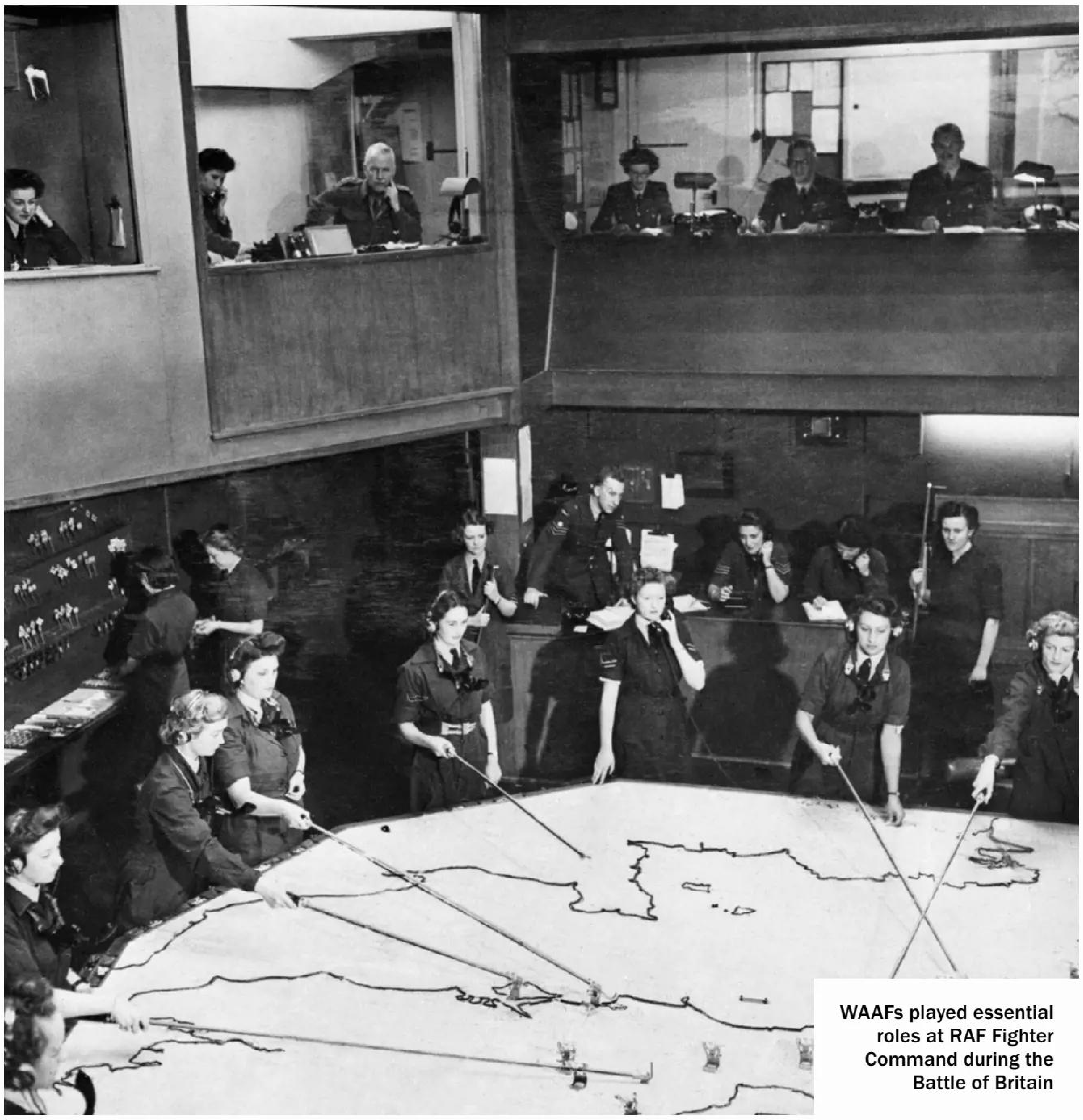
The WAAFs were a vital resource during the Battle of Britain. One role of immense importance was the operation of barrage balloon sites. This required raising and lowering the balloons, which were designed to deter enemy bombers by floating above the potential targets of raids. This would force the German pilots to fly at a higher altitude and impact the accuracy of their bombing. The balloons also had the additional benefit of bringing the aircraft in range of anti-aircraft guns.

Initially, women were believed to not have the physical strength required to fulfil such a role, due to the 20-metre (66-foot)-long and nine-metre (30-foot)-high balloons. It was also very challenging to keep the balloons not only inflated but in position, particularly during bad weather. However, the initial female volunteers smashed expectations, operating the sites with skill and speed. Eventually, over 1,000 barrage balloon sites would be operated by women in Britain.

The work of WAAF plotters was of immense importance during the Battle of Britain. Based in the sector station operations rooms, the plotters worked in teams of ten, meticulously tracking the direction and size of incoming German raids. Wooden blocks placed around a large table would chart the raids, listing the name and strength of the incoming units, as well as the direction they were coming from in the form of arrows placed behind each block. They were also colour coded to denote how fresh the information was. This allowed a quick and comprehensive view of the most dangerous and time-critical threats to the nation. The men seated above the plotters would use the information provided by the women to direct squadrons into action and communicate the vital information to other squadrons.

The Nursing Orderlies were responsible for evacuating the wounded from France

The WAAF's contributions were essential in keeping the RAF flying



WAAFs played essential roles at RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain

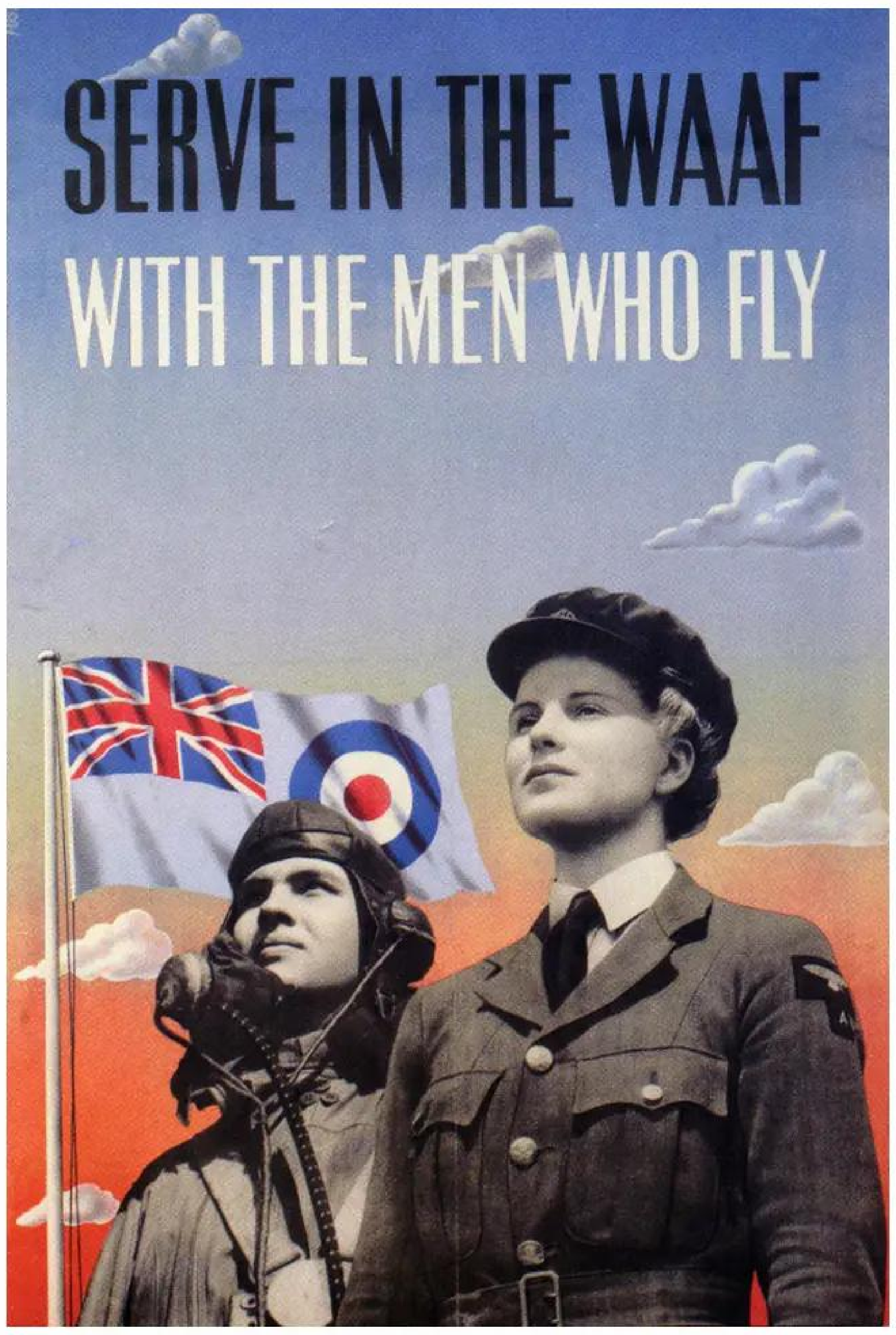
During the summer of 1940, there were thousands of WAAFs placed in Fighter Command airbases across the country to assist in the Dowding System of defence, including bases at Manston, Hawkringe and Biggin Hill. These were especially dangerous places to work, as they were often prime targets for Luftwaffe bombs during the Battle of Britain.

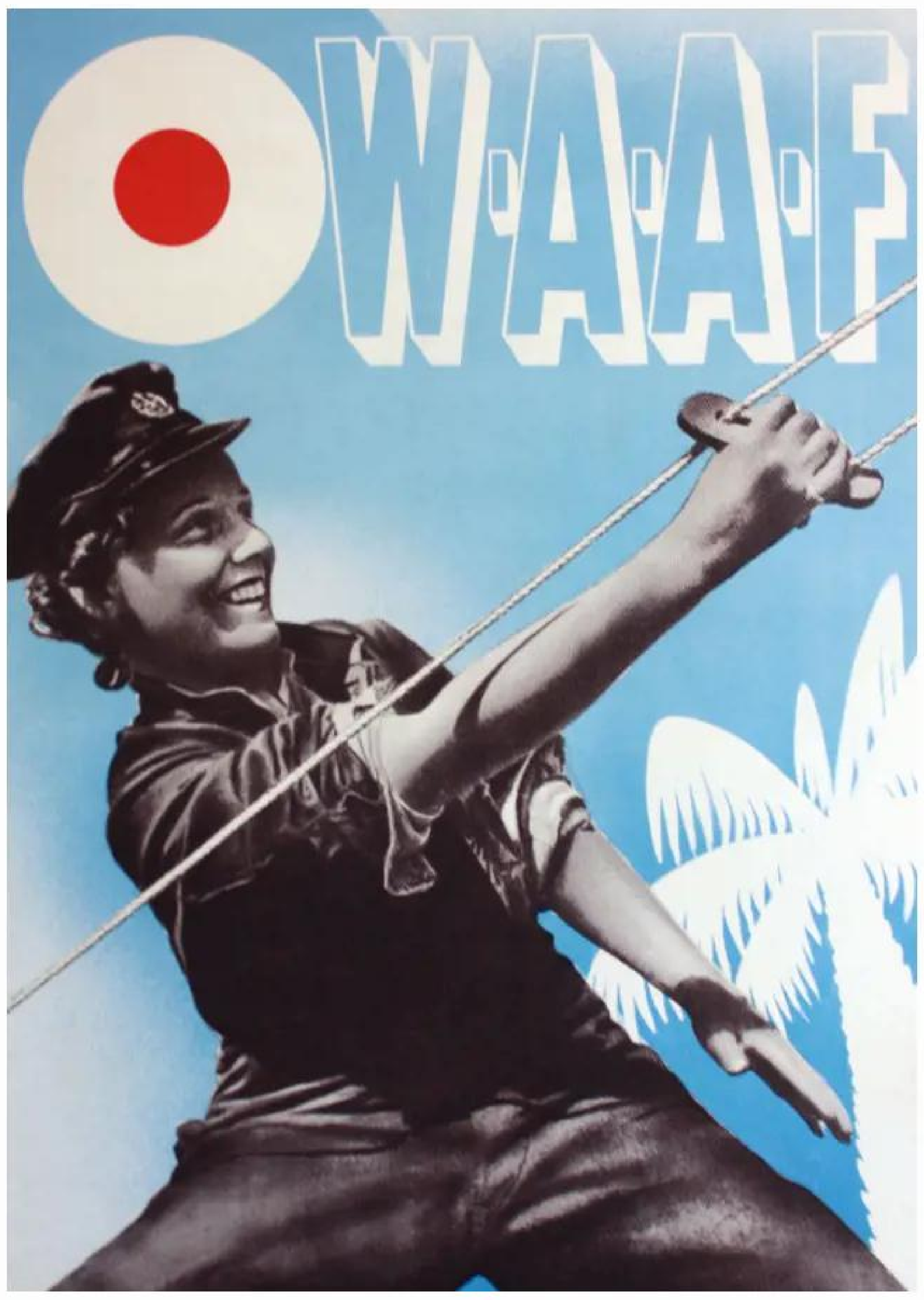
One of the worst-affected bases was RAF Biggin Hill in Kent, which saw 39 people killed in one attack on 30 August. WAAF members Sergeant Joan Mortimer, Flight Officer Elspeth Henderson and Sergeant Helen Turner all worked at Biggin Hill as teleprinter operators. On 1 September 1940, the base came under heavy attack from the Luftwaffe while the women were inside the building.

Showing immense bravery, Turner continued to work the switchboard even as the building was falling down around her, while Henderson kept in contact with Fighter Command Headquarters in Uxbridge despite having been knocked to the ground when the operations room took a direct hit from a German bomb. Both women worked tirelessly through the night to keep the station operational. The two WAAFs were so determined to help their country that they only abandoned their posts when a fire broke out and they were ordered to leave.

Meanwhile, Mortimer was in the armoury when the raid began. This was an incredibly dangerous place to be as the room was packed with tons of high explosives. Despite this she stayed put at the telephone switchboard, ensuring that messages could be relayed to the defence posts near the airfield. When the situation became dire, Mortimer snatched a handful of red flags and hurried outside, marking all the unexploded bombs scattered around the building. Even a bomb exploding nearby didn't stop her. All three women were awarded military medals in November 1940 for their courage.

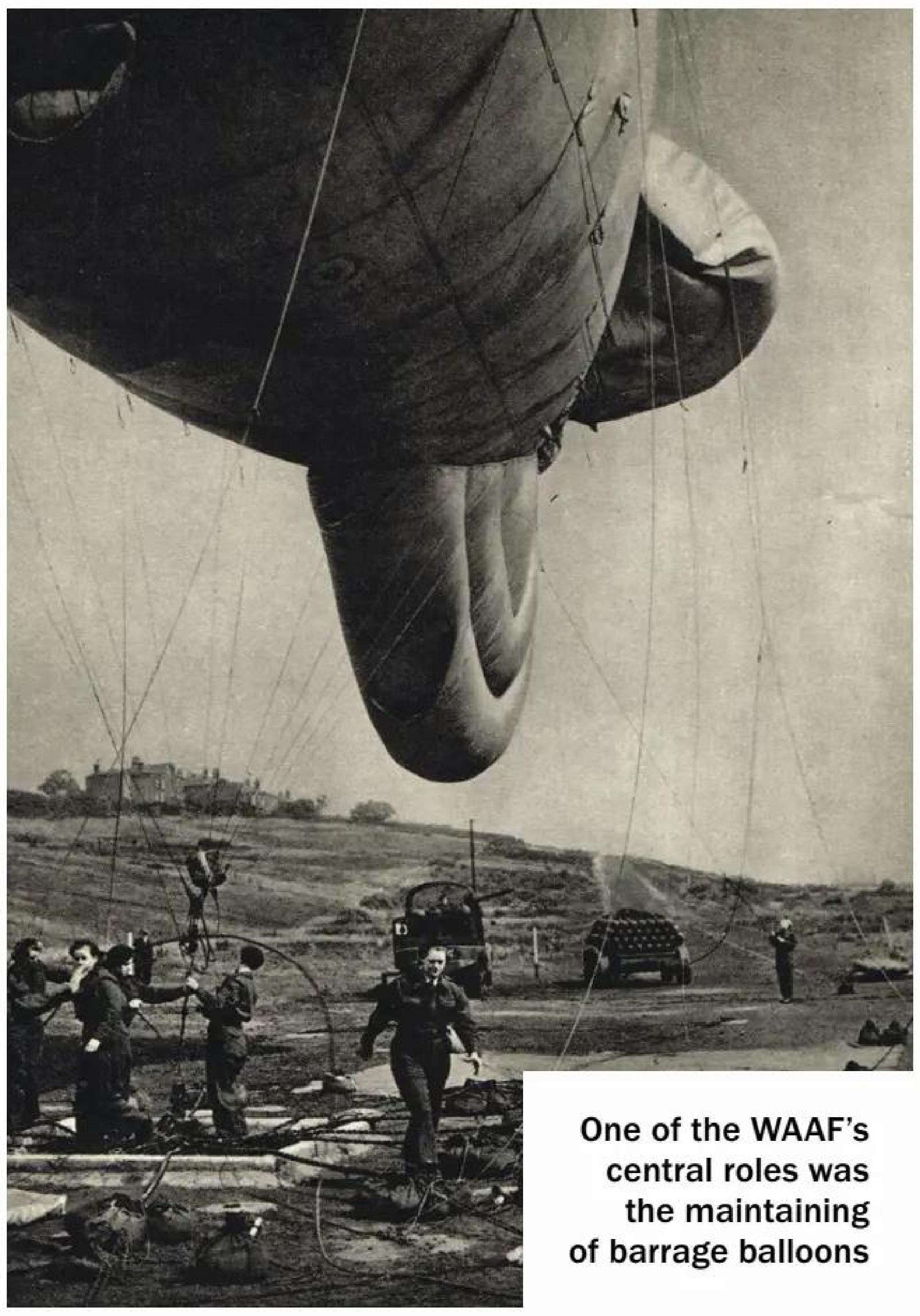
An additional branch of the WAAF were the Nursing Orderlies. These women would fly on RAF transport planes, putting themselves in immense danger in order to help evacuate the wounded from the battlefields of Normandy. Nicknamed 'Flying Nightingales', this team of nurses would administer oxygen, injections and deal with injuries such as missing limbs, head trauma, broken bones and burns. The Flying Nightingales brought back almost 100,000 wounded soldiers from Europe to Britain. They also carried vital supplies to the battlefield. An incredibly risky role, the women were given parachutes on the flight out, but on the way back they were ordered to stay with the plane and treat the survivors, and the parachutes were locked away. The planes were so full with casualties that the nurses would have to stand the entire journey back. These women could not be recognised as being RAF nurses, else they


SERVE IN THE WAAF
WITH THE MEN WHO FLY



Top: By 1945, 250,000 women had served in the WAAF in over 110 different roles
Above: At its peak strength, over 2,000 women were enlisting in the WAAF every week

> *"The work of WAAF plotters was of immense importance during the Battle of Britain"*



One of the WAAF's central roles was the maintaining of barrage balloons

would have had held the rank of officer. For all intents and purposes they were volunteers and regarded as civilians in uniforms, with no rank and no medals. For decades the bravery and sacrifice of these nurses went unacknowledged, however, in October 2008 the Duchess of Cornwall awarded the seven WAAF nurses still living lifetime achievement awards for their service to the nation.

It is nigh on impossible to overestimate how vital the WAAF was to the war effort, especially during the Battle of Britain. At its peak the WAAF had over 180,000 members and was recruiting 2,000 women per week. At RAF Uxbridge, responsible for commanding all of the aircraft in the South East, 85 per cent of the staff in the bunker were WAAFs.

Despite their remarkable contribution, WAAFs were only paid two-thirds as much as their male counterparts. Without the bravery and dedication of the WAAF, it is of no doubt that the RAF would have been unable to cover all the necessary roles required, therefore ultimately jeopardising the chances of victory in the Battle of Britain. For women this was a huge achievement, not only in terms of the war effort, but also in regards to their place in society. While previously their capability to contribute had been in doubt, the women's tireless work during the conflict proved they were capable of aiding the war effort.

Six military medals were awarded to WAAFs for their courage and exceptional service, but for many, the WAAFs' greatest contribution was the support they provided, which was crucial when the bombs began to fly. Members of the WAAF served not only in Britain but also the U.S., Egypt and in various countries across Europe. In 1949, the WAAF was re-formed into the Women's Royal Air Force, and in 1994 it was fully integrated into the RAF.

Today, women fulfil all roles within the air force, including, in 2017, the RAF Regiment, with the first women joining the specialist corps in January 2020.

Britain's Muslim heroine

THE BRITISH SPY WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE TO FIGHT TYRANNY

For her courage in the face of evil Khan was posthumously awarded the George Cross

Born in Moscow on the dawn of the new year in 1914, Noor Inayat Khan was a descendant of Indian Muslim nobility but would go on to make a name for herself through her own bravery.

Khan first lived in England, then moved to France. When the country fell to German troops Khan fled back to England. At heart a pacifist, she was influenced by the teachings of Gandhi. It was this love of peace that motivated her to play a role in defeating the tyranny of the Nazis. This desire for justice led her to join the WAAF in November 1940.

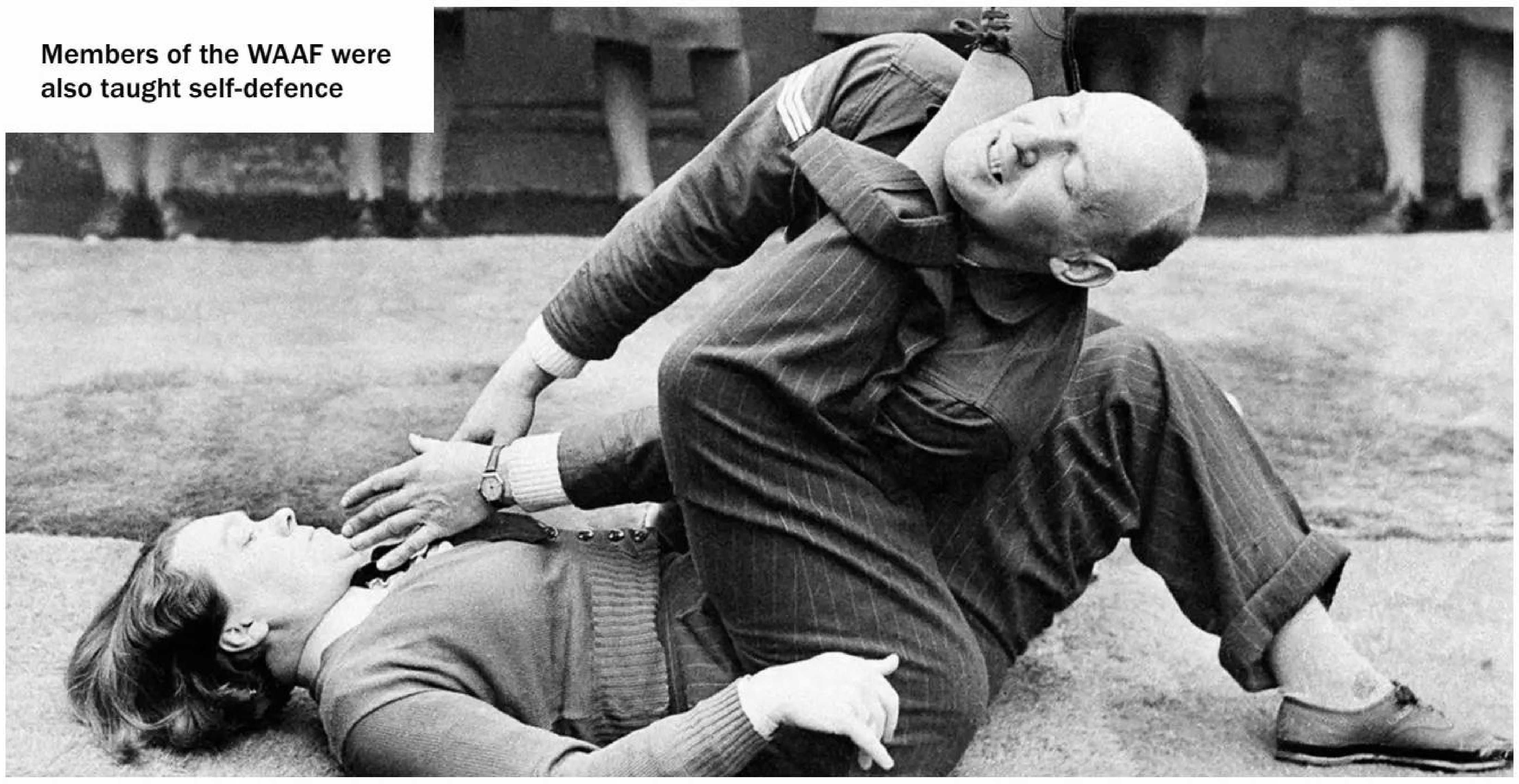
After two years of training, Khan was flown to France to become an operator in occupied territory, the first woman sent there for this role. Khan's superiors had their doubts about her suitability, saying that she was unstable and temperamental and "not overburdened with brains", but they did praise her hard work ethic. However, in the field, Khan's experience in playing the harp gave her an edge, enabling her to work with impressive speed and accuracy.

Khan's job was one of the most dangerous of all – to send and receive messages about sabotage operations and where to send weapons for resistance fighters. The operators were at great risk of detection, a possibility that only became more likely as the war progressed. Khan had to take on a new identity, that of children's nurse 'Jeanne-Marie Renier', but to her colleagues she had the codename 'Madeleine'. Despite multiple members of the network being arrested, Khan remained in the resistance, moving from place to place to avoid capture.

Sadly, this only lasted the summer. In October 1943, Khan was betrayed by one of two French women; either a double agent, or a spurned lover who lost the affections of a man she liked to Khan. Either way, Khan was captured by the Gestapo, who used the operator's secret signals to trick London into sending more agents into their waiting hands. Khan did manage to escape from prison but was arrested within a few hours. By November 1943, she had been transferred to Pforzheim Prison, where she was classed as highly dangerous and kept in chains.

Despite her horrendous treatment, Khan resisted revealing any information. By September 1944, the Gestapo gave up their interrogations and sent her to Dachau concentration camp, where she was executed by being shot. Her last word was reported as "Liberté".

> *"Khan's job was one of the most dangerous of all – to send and receive messages about sabotage operations"*



Members of the WAAF were also taught self-defence

Images: Getty Images, Alamy, Adobe Stock

KEEP CALM
AND
CARRY ON
JACKSONS
5

HITLERS' BOMBS
CAN'T BEAT US
OUR ORANGES
CAME THROUGH
MUSSO'S 'LAKE'
3½D

Image: Alamy

76 **The Blitz: Britain under siege**
Faced with relentless air raids, the British people struggled on through death and destruction for nine gruelling months

82 **Inside a WWII Anderson shelter**
Take a look around an air raid shelter

84 **Blitz-busting tips**
From fake stockings to replacing bananas with boiled parsnips, rationing required Brits to think outside the box

90 **Make do and mend**
How a scarcity of materials inspired a wave of creative clothing

96 **Underground: The forgotten work of the Bevin Boys**
With an energy crisis looming, the country needed an army of workers to operate its coal mines, men whose contributions were crucial to the war effort

98 **Crime in blackout London**
When the lights went out, it wasn't just the wrath of the German bombers that Londoners needed to fear...

THE BLITZ BRITAIN UNDER SIEGE

The story of the nine-month bombing campaign that ravaged parts of Britain

WORDS **STEVE WRIGHT**

While no nation is ever truly free from the threat of invasion or the ravages of war, Britain has had more advantages than most when it comes to defence. As an island, its ready-made moat in the form of the English Channel and North Sea has provided an obstacle for would-be occupiers over the centuries. As technology advanced, however, the moat became moot. While it prevented Britain from sharing the same fate that Hitler's Blitzkrieg had inflicted on the rest of Europe, it was no defence against the Luftwaffe.

Initially, Hitler's targets were purely military. Between 10 July and 31 October 1940, the Battle of Britain was fought as the Luftwaffe faced off against the RAF, in the process attacking factories, airfields, boat convoys and ports in an attempt to either establish air supremacy ahead of a forthcoming invasion or compel the British into accepting a peace settlement.

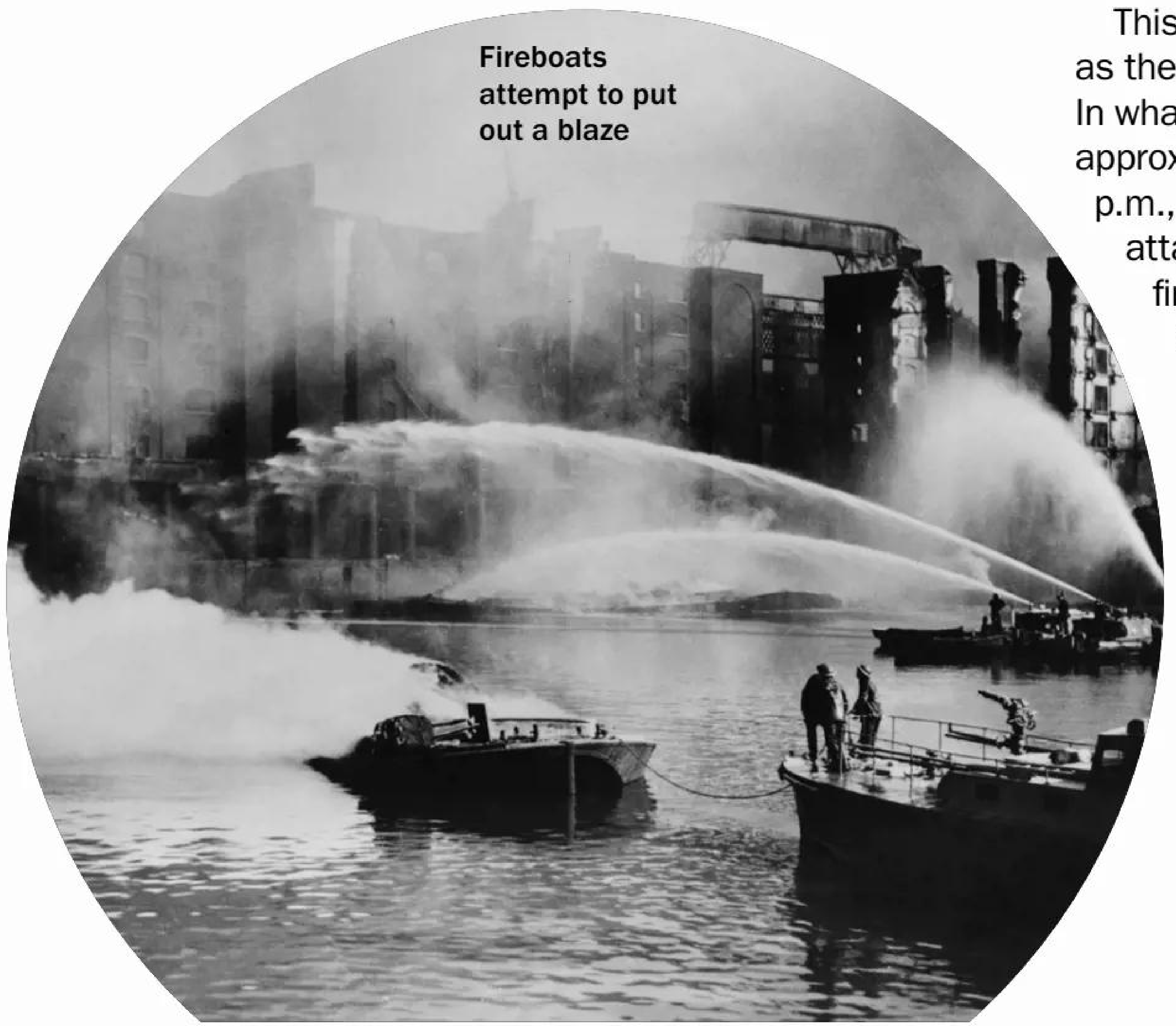
In the event, neither happened. While losses on both sides were heavy, the Luftwaffe failed in both of its aims. Yet while Operation Sea Lion was indefinitely shelved, the country's ordeal was only just beginning. The Battle of Britain had involved military targets; now the whole civilian population was at risk. As the poet Robert Graves put it, a soldier "cannot feel that his rendezvous with death is more certain than that of his Aunt Fanny, the firewatcher".

The first air-raid sirens in London actually sounded on 3 September 1939, the day Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Germany, but they were false alarms. It wasn't until just over a year later, on 7 September 1940, that the capital was first explicitly targeted. The sirens would sound again many more times.

A formation of 617 Messerschmitt fighters and 348 bombers set off from northern France and were first spotted over the English coast at around 4.14 p.m. But rather than branch off towards various targets, as was the norm, they carried on to their target in London's Thames Estuary. The first bombs – hundreds of small incendiary devices – landed on the Ford motor works in Dagenham and the Beckton gasworks, situated above the three Royal Docks at Woolwich Reach. The resulting fires spread from North Woolwich to Tower Bridge, which, as well as the obvious civilian and building destruction, dispatched many vital war supplies. The RAF was caught unawares, and firefighters called to the scene faced their first showcase of what was to come.

This was only the beginning of the day's carnage, as the bombers continued to come back around. In what later became known as 'Black Saturday', approximately 300 bombers flew over London at 6.10 p.m., using the earlier fires as guiding beacons. Their attack lasted until 4.30 a.m. the next morning. The first day of bombing left around 450 dead and 1,600 injured, not to mention the destruction of numerous supplies and shipping.

This would prove to be the first of 57 consecutive nights of bombing in the capital. Winston Churchill referred to the attacks as "indiscriminate bombings", saying Hitler hoped that "…by killing large numbers of civilians, and women and children, that he will terrorise and cull the people of this mighty imperial city".



Fireboats attempt to put out a blaze

> *“The Battle of Britain had involved military targets; now the whole civilian population was at risk”*

The Blitz permanently changed the landscape of much of the country

A Luftwaffe pilot's view of London during a bombing raid

While this may well be true, it was in all likelihood a secondary aim. According to Juliet Gardiner in her 2010 book, *The Blitz: The British Under Attack*, "In fact its intention was to devastate the London docks so that the food and materiel essential to the prosecution of the war could not be imported, and to destroy government offices in central London from where the war was being directed".

By this point London had become "a city pock-marked with ruins and rubble, its streets assaulted, private spaces ripped open to public gaze," a placed haunted by "the weary, soot-blackened faces of the firemen… the numbing sense of exhaustion".

The results of the night's bombing were immediately apparent both by the obvious physical destruction and the smell of burning that clung in the air. Few were truly safe. More than 2 million residences had access to small, self-constructed Anderson shelters, and some were given grants to reinforce rooms in their own homes to act as shelters, but many in poor and vulnerable areas didn't share this relative luxury. A lot of people used public shelters, but this wasn't always enough to save them.

One such example of this can be seen in a bombing raid on 13 October 1940, during which a bomb penetrated all the way through a block of flats towards the basement of a public shelter in Stoke Newington, where some of the street's residents were hiding. The shelter collapsed and many of its inhabitants suffocated or were drowned by sewage coming in from broken pipes. More than 160 people died.

Despite their use initially being discouraged (and in some cases restricted) by the government, many London Underground tube stations became popular as shelters for large sections of the city's population. While conditions were cramped and unavoidably uncomfortable, they were eventually made relatively homely, with bunks and food stalls set up. However, tragedies still took place.

On 12 October, seven people died during an explosion at Trafalgar Square station and a further 19 the following night at Bounds Green station. The next evening, more than 60 people perished due to the after-effects of a heavy bomb attack at Balham High Road, and on 11 January 1941 an explosion at Bank Station killed 111 people. Church crypts were often used as shelters, and, in coastal locations such as Ramsgate, caves were too.

London was the most frequently bombed city (raided 71 times), followed by Exeter and Liverpool, but many other places also suffered grievously. Birmingham was heavily raided in November 1940 after a shift in strategy that saw industrial cities increasingly targeted, with more than 800 people killed that month (including 53 in one night on 19 November during the bombing of the BSA factory), followed by a 13-hour raid on 11 December during which 263 people died.

Fellow Midlands city Coventry was also on the receiving end of the Luftwaffe's wrath, attacked during a 12-hour spell on 14 November in retaliation for an earlier British raid on Berlin. Due to the sheer number of incendiary devices

"'Black Saturday' was the first of 57 consecutive nights of bombing in the capital"

Damage to the London Necropolis Railway Station after London's biggest night-time air raid

dropped, it was reported that “a halo of red flames” could be seen from Warwick and Birmingham, with the damage caused being such that *Daily Express* journalist Hilde Marchant referred to it as “the night they Guernicaed Coventry”. Almost a third of the houses in the city were rendered uninhabitable and a third of its shops destroyed. Many of the 568 dead had to be buried in mass funerals, and 1,256 people were left injured.

Liverpool was referred to as Hitler’s number-one target outside the capital due to its arrangement of power stations, gas stations, docks and food storage. One particularly destructive sequence took place between 28–29 November, during which more than 317 tonnes (350 tons) of high-explosive bombs, 30 land mines and 3,000 incendiary devices were dropped. Nearly 300 people died, including 166 who perished when the building above their air raid shelter was hit by a parachute mine. Subsequent attacks from 20–23 December took out swathes of dockside, shipping and residential areas, with hundreds losing their lives over these nights. The Merseyside town of Bootle stands as an example of concentrated destruction: 8,000 of its 17,000 homes were destroyed or damaged in some way.

Liverpool wasn’t the only northern city to be hit – Hull and Manchester were among those that also suffered greatly, with almost 544 tonnes (600 tons) of bombs dropped on each.

Coastal locations didn’t escape the attacks either. Southampton saw 77 killed in one night on 23 November – a date that also saw much of the city centre destroyed. A further 137 perished on the night of 30 November – 1 December, 96 of whom died when their shelters were hit.

Nearby Portsmouth was deluged with more than 40,000 incendiaries on 10–11 January 1941, causing more than 2,000 fires and 171 deaths, and Bristol suffered from repeated assaults. One attack on 24 November killed 207 and laid waste to much of the city’s historic architecture, and another, 12-hour raid on 3 January wrecked much of what was left, killing 149 people in the process.

Later on during the Blitz, Scotland would also come to suffer. Having previously escaped relatively unscathed, Glasgow and Clydebank were both targeted on 13 March as part of another shift in strategy geared towards targeting port towns. The latter saw 35,000 of its 50,000 population homeless by the second night of its blitz, such was the extent of the damage, and only eight of its 12,000 homes were reported to be undamaged. Elsewhere in the home nations, Swansea and Cardiff were both extensively bombed, and Belfast suffered its first raid on 7–8 April, closely followed by one on 15 April. Even neutral countries weren’t safe: Dublin was bombed twice (in error, for which the Nazi Government later apologised).

The Blitz continued more or less unabated from 7 September 1940 until 11 May 1941, aside from the odd gap: after 57 consecutive nights of bombing during its opening phase, attacks paused due to increasingly adverse weather conditions, and there was a mutual cessation in bombing from both sides over the Christmas period (although campaigns continued

Second Great Fire of London

THE STORY OF ONE OF THE WAR’S MOST CATASTROPHIC NIGHTS OF BOMBING

The days of 24–26 December marked a reprieve of sorts for the nation’s bombed-out cities. German attacks ceased and the people were able to temporarily forget their troubles to enjoy Christmas, or ‘Blitzmas’ as it came to be known. Many people still spent Christmas Eve in bomb shelters, though, just in case.

The respite was short-lived. On 29 December, the Luftwaffe returned, bringing 109 tonnes (120 tons) of explosives and 22,000 incendiary devices, with which they carpeted the city. Around 100,000 bombs fell in just a few hours.

Fires spread throughout the city, the largest being half a square mile between Moorgate, Aldersgate, Cannon Street and Old Street. The area affected was even bigger than the 1666 Great Fire of London recorded by Samuel Pepys. Indeed, Virginia Woolf wrote, “On Sunday night, as I was reading about the great fire, in a very accurate and detailed book, London was burning. 8 of my city churches destroyed, & the Guildhall.”

Having been damaged during the original Great Fire and gradually restored and updated in the intervening years, the Guildhall was one of the victims of the bombings, with many of its treasures lost. St Paul’s Cathedral was also heavily damaged when it was struck by 28 bombs. Churchill insisted that St Paul’s be saved, and the cathedral became a symbol of London’s defiance and determination to carry on.

Attempts at combating the fires were hindered by damage to the water mains and the Thames being at low tide, with fire brigade boats unable to get close enough or draw sufficient water. In all, around 160 people died during this night of bombings, 14 of whom were firefighters.

> *“The Luftwaffe planes returned… and around 100,000 bombs fell in just a few hours”*

St Paul’s Cathedral was severely damaged on 29 December 1940

Port of call

WHEN THE BLITZ DEVIATED FROM THE MAJOR CITIES

While London was the most heavily bombed British city during the Blitz, it was far from the only place affected. As the days passed, other towns and cities around the country found themselves subjected to the Luftwaffe's brutal attacks.

In 1941, the Luftwaffe shifted its strategy, focusing a large segment of its attentions on the county's major ports, with the aim of disrupting the production of transport links. Notably, these included the likes of Cardiff, Swansea, Hull, Southampton, Portsmouth, Bristol and Plymouth.

Many of these places suffered greatly. Bristol, in particular, was badly hit, seeing nearly 90,000 buildings destroyed or damaged in some way, encompassing areas like Park Street and Castle Park. The Good Friday raid of 1941 was particularly damaging, inflicting destruction on a number of residential areas and causing the permanent closure of the Bristol Tramways.

Hull was also targeted relentlessly. More than 200 deaths were caused during three nights of attacks in March 1941, with additional assaults in May causing more than 400 fatalities. Including and beyond the actual Blitz itself, Hull was proportionately the most damaged British city during the war, seeing around 95 per cent of its buildings damaged and subjected to 1,000 hours of bombing.

In Wales, the Cardiff docks and Swansea's port and oil refinery found themselves targeted. Areas including Grangetown, Cathays, Townhill and Manselton were damaged, along with iconic buildings such as Llandaff Cathedral.

Soldiers help to clear debris in Hull

> *"If the intent was to destroy morale and encourage a surrender, it was a resounding failure"*

with a vengeance shortly after). In all, more than 40,000 civilians were killed during this time, around half of them in London.

Yet while the damage – both in terms of loss of life and physical destruction – was undoubtedly immense, it still stood out as a severe strategic failure from Hitler's perspective. If the intent was to savage Britain's productivity, then it didn't work. Output actually continued to increase for much of this period, only dipping slightly in April 1941 before rising again the following month. While industrial cities like Birmingham, Liverpool and Belfast were hit hard, this wasn't anywhere near enough to knock them out of the war.

If the intent was to destroy morale and encourage a surrender, that was a resounding failure too. Despite all the damage that had been inflicted, people carried on with life. Firefighters and ARP wardens were in high demand across the country and increasingly recruited from the civilian populace. While morale understandably dropped in places – public feeling in heavily impacted locations like Portsmouth and Bristol was understandably adversely affected at the time – people generally got on with life as best they could. Bombed-out shops often opened outside their newly derelict premises, and many adopted a real gallows humour in the face of what was going on.

That's not to say all was well. Old resentments were stirred up (often by what was perceived as the London-centric coverage of the bombings), and numerous cases of looting were reported – 1,662 in October 1940 in the capital alone. The Blitz also provided cover for many a career criminal, with the wholesale theft of the contents of evacuated or damaged houses particularly afflicting places like Dover and Cardiff, and protection rackets, forgery and even murder taking place under the shadow of the blackout.

So while the Blitz caused significant damage and horrendous loss of life, ultimately it didn't have any kind of serious sway on the war, despite a late flurry of attacks aimed at industrial and port areas from March to May 1941.

Liverpool and Hull came in for particular punishment at this time, and a 10 May raid on Central London saw around 1,436 killed. Yet Britain would not yield. Finally recognising this, and the damage caused to the Luftwaffe (aircraft

Buckingham Palace suffered nine direct hits during the Blitz

casualties rose with the increased prevalence of anti-aircraft defences), Hitler switched his attention towards the invasion of the USSR.

To this end, in late May he withdrew Albert Kesselring's Luftflotte 2 Division, leaving Hugo Sperrle's Luftflotte 3 to carry on the raids, with submarine warfare in the Atlantic courtesy of the dreaded U-boats now the preferred method of impeding Britain's supply line. But any hopes of forcing Britain to come to terms had been well and truly dashed. In a booming speech in the Berlin Sportpalast on 30 January 1942, Hitler vented his frustrations at continued Allied resistance: "What are we taking away from England… what from America? Nothing at all! How many times did I offer them peace?!"

Despite his confident assurances of victory, Hitler had failed to finish off a dangerous opponent in 1940, an error that would cost him dearly, for Britain was determined to battle on through the bombs until Germany was defeated.

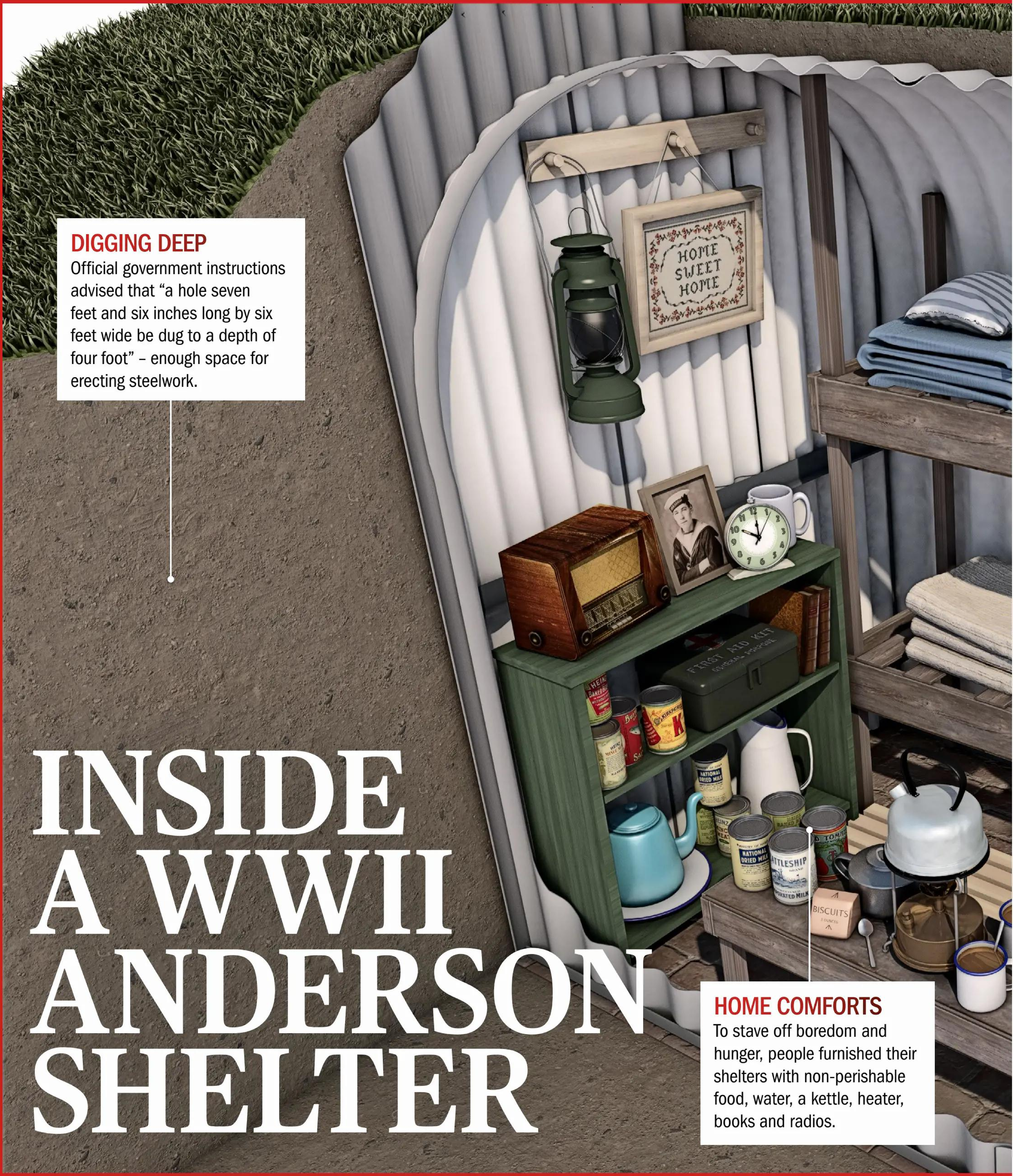
Image source: Wiki

Nowhere was safe, as evidenced by this bomb damage to St Thomas' Hospital in Lambeth

Even as buildings were destroyed people carried on, picking up the pieces

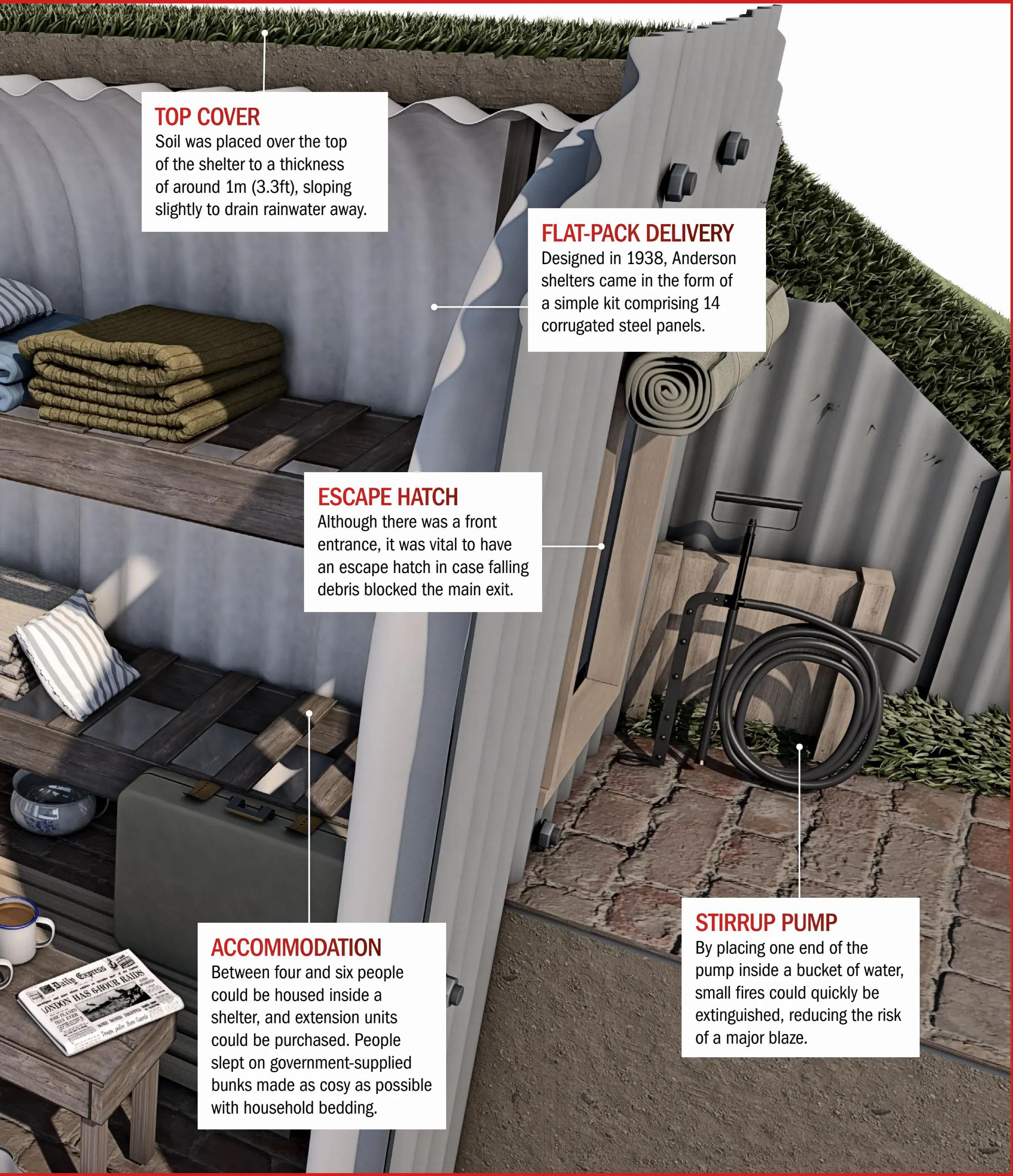
Winston Churchill inspects bomb damage in Battersea

INSIDE A WWII ANDERSON SHELTER


HOME SWEET HOME
FIRST AID KIT
NATIONAL DRIED MILK
BATTLESHIP
BISCUITS

DIGGING DEEP
Official government instructions advised that “a hole seven feet and six inches long by six feet wide be dug to a depth of four foot” – enough space for erecting steelwork.

HOME COMFORTS
To stave off boredom and hunger, people furnished their shelters with non-perishable food, water, a kettle, heater, books and radios.



TOP COVER

Soil was placed over the top of the shelter to a thickness of around 1m (3.3ft), sloping slightly to drain rainwater away.

FLAT-PACK DELIVERY

Designed in 1938, Anderson shelters came in the form of a simple kit comprising 14 corrugated steel panels.

ESCAPE HATCH

Although there was a front entrance, it was vital to have an escape hatch in case falling debris blocked the main exit.

STIRRUP PUMP

By placing one end of the pump inside a bucket of water, small fires could quickly be extinguished, reducing the risk of a major blaze.

ACCOMMODATION

Between four and six people could be housed inside a shelter, and extension units could be purchased. People slept on government-supplied bunks made as cosy as possible with household bedding.

Illustration: Adrian Mann

BLITZ-BUSTING TIPS

With many basic ingredients and luxury items hard to source during WWII, intrepid cooks and fashion fans were forced to find creative solutions

WORDS **MELANIE CLEGG**

Before the outbreak of WWII, Britain imported most of its food and was heavily reliant on overseas trading for many other goods, which left it at a disadvantage after September 1939 when the supply chain was interrupted by naval blockades. Rationing was a gradual process, with bacon, butter and eggs being the first of many food items to be restricted in order to ensure that there was enough to go around. The scarcity of fresh produce and essential ingredients like eggs, flour and sugar meant that cooks had to find substitutes if they wanted to eat well. Meanwhile, items like clothes, silk lingerie, stockings, perfume and makeup also became increasingly difficult to find, with the result that aspiring fashionistas were forced to be creative if they wanted to look their best.

MARZIPAN

MAKE CHRISTMAS PERFECT WITH MOCK MARZIPAN

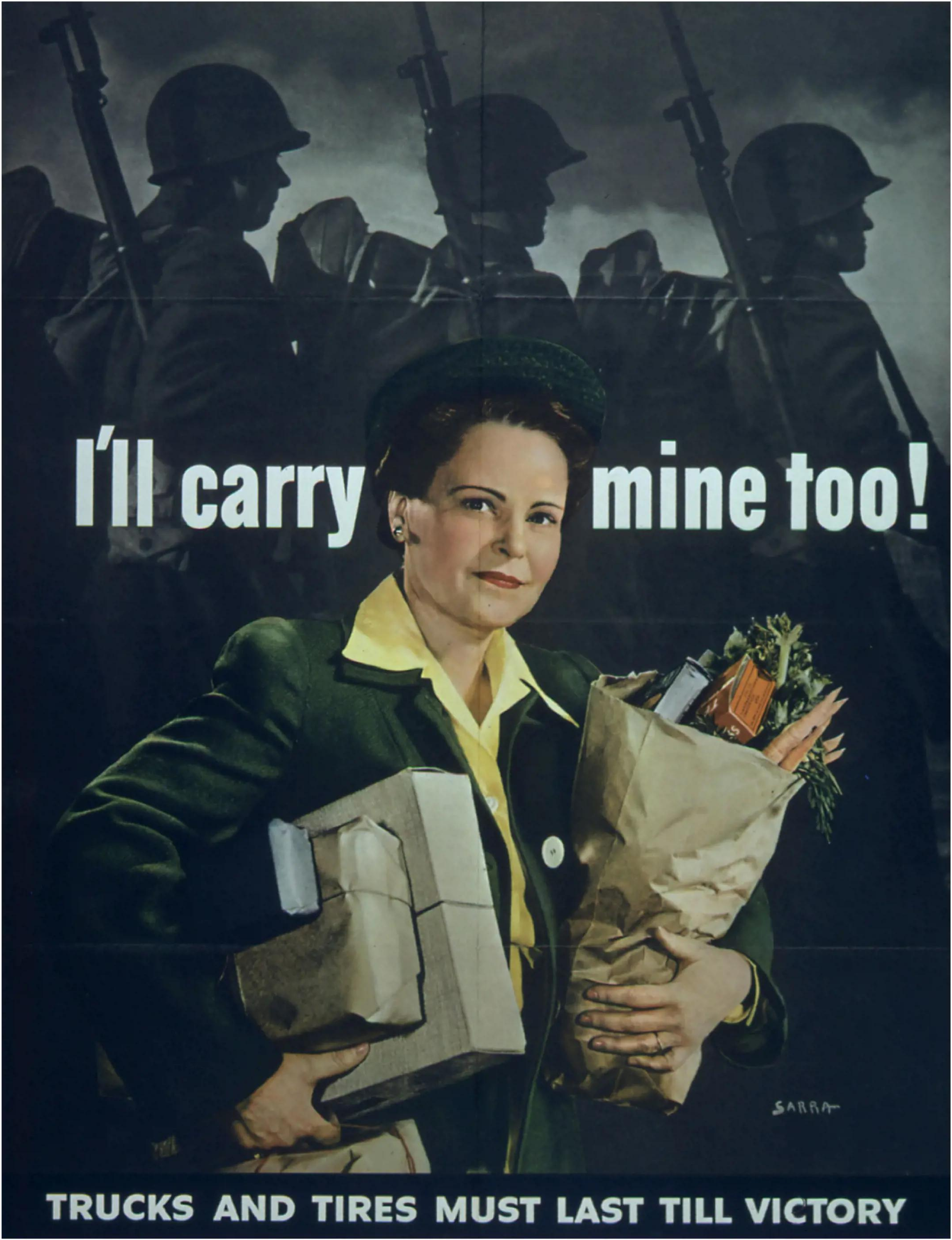
Although Christmas during the wartime years was a challenge thanks to rationing and a lack of resources, it was still one of the highlights of the year and a time when almost everyone could try to relax and do their best to forget about the war with as many of the usual festive trappings as possible. For many it was unthinkable to celebrate Christmas without the traditional fruit cake, but with eggs, dried fruit and spices so difficult to source, making it could be tricky and many people were forced to use eggless recipes. With almonds in short supply, making marzipan could also be difficult, so resourceful cooks made their own version with margarine, water, almond essence, sugar and either flour or breadcrumbs, which could then be wrapped around the cake.

> *"Some resourceful cooks tried to create a honey substitute by boiling parsley with water, sugar and vinegar"*

PARSLEY HONEY

PARSLEY MAKES A SURPRISINGLY REALISTIC HONEY SUBSTITUTE

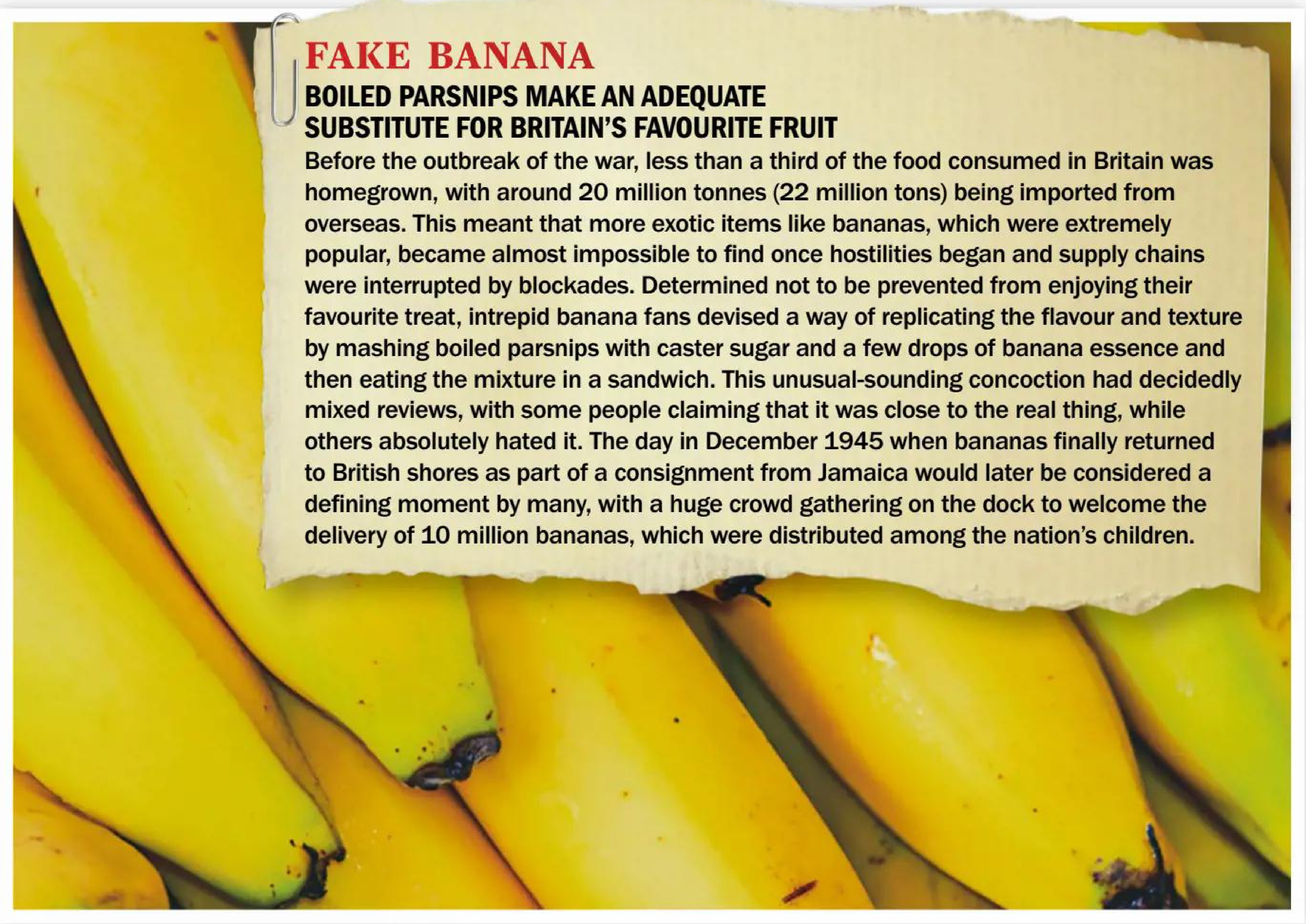
Honey was much in demand during WWII as it was an excellent substitute for sugar, which was in short supply. However, this demand meant that it was not always readily available, especially to those not fortunate enough to live in the countryside. Some resourceful cooks tried to create their own by boiling parsley with water, sugar and vinegar, which produced a syrupy mixture that looked and tasted like heather honey. It could be kept for several months in jars, which meant that the parsley honey could really come into its own when sugar was in short supply.


I'll carry mine too!
SARRA
TRUCKS AND TIRES MUST LAST TILL VICTORY

CARROTS

DECREASE THE CARROT GLUT BY USING THEM IN EVERYTHING

Not everything was in short supply during the war, and when Britain experienced a glut of carrots the Ministry of Food was forced to be creative in order to encourage people to use more of them so that nothing was wasted. It claimed that eating carrots would improve night vision (essential during the blackout) and that this was the reason why RAF pilots were so good at shooting down enemy planes during night-time missions – a myth that persisted for a long time after the war. Suggested recipes included carrot cakes, biscuits, scones and puddings as well as, more unusually, carrot fudge, which involved boiling grated carrots with gelatine and orange essence before leaving it to cool and set. Carrots, with the addition of some almond essence, were also used in place of apricots, which were usually hard to source, in mock apricot tart.



FAKE BANANA

BOILED PARSNIPS MAKE AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE FRUIT

Before the outbreak of the war, less than a third of the food consumed in Britain was homegrown, with around 20 million tonnes (22 million tons) being imported from overseas. This meant that more exotic items like bananas, which were extremely popular, became almost impossible to find once hostilities began and supply chains were interrupted by blockades. Determined not to be prevented from enjoying their favourite treat, intrepid banana fans devised a way of replicating the flavour and texture by mashing boiled parsnips with caster sugar and a few drops of banana essence and then eating the mixture in a sandwich. This unusual-sounding concoction had decidedly mixed reviews, with some people claiming that it was close to the real thing, while others absolutely hated it. The day in December 1945 when bananas finally returned to British shores as part of a consignment from Jamaica would later be considered a defining moment by many, with a huge crowd gathering on the dock to welcome the delivery of 10 million bananas, which were distributed among the nation's children.

WEDDING DRESSES

BEG, BORROW OR STEAL PARACHUTE SILK FOR THE PERFECT WEDDING DRESS

Finding the perfect wedding dress has always been stressful for aspiring brides, and it was even more difficult during the war when resources were extremely limited. Many women made do by simply wearing their best outfit or borrowing something from a friend or family member. But others remained determined to wear a traditional white dress, preferably made from silk. As silk supplies had been diverted to the military in order to manufacture parachutes, brides were forced to be resourceful if they wanted to get their hands on some precious white material. Those who were engaged to a member of a parachute regiment were obviously in luck, with some brides even being able to make dresses out of parachutes that had saved their fiancé's life, but others were forced to either buy or barter in order to obtain some silk. The silk maps used by pilots were also much coveted and were often transformed into lingerie or even quirky dresses, many of which became prized family heirlooms.

FAKE WEDDING CAKES

USE YOUR ARTISTIC SKILLS TO CREATE THE PERFECT WEDDING CAKE

With the ingredients to make fruit cakes often in short supply, many wartime brides struggled to provide a traditional lavish wedding cake covered in royal icing. While many couples went without a fruit cake, others used their artistic skills to create fake ones from plaster and cardboard that would then be painted white and decorated in the usual fashion with flowers, ribbons and a model bride and groom. These fake cakes would take pride of place at the wedding breakfast with the guests, who would usually be sent home with small slices of genuine cake, often having no idea that they had been duped.

MOCK CRAB

IT'S NOTHING LIKE THE REAL THING BUT STILL MAKES A GREAT SANDWICH FILLING

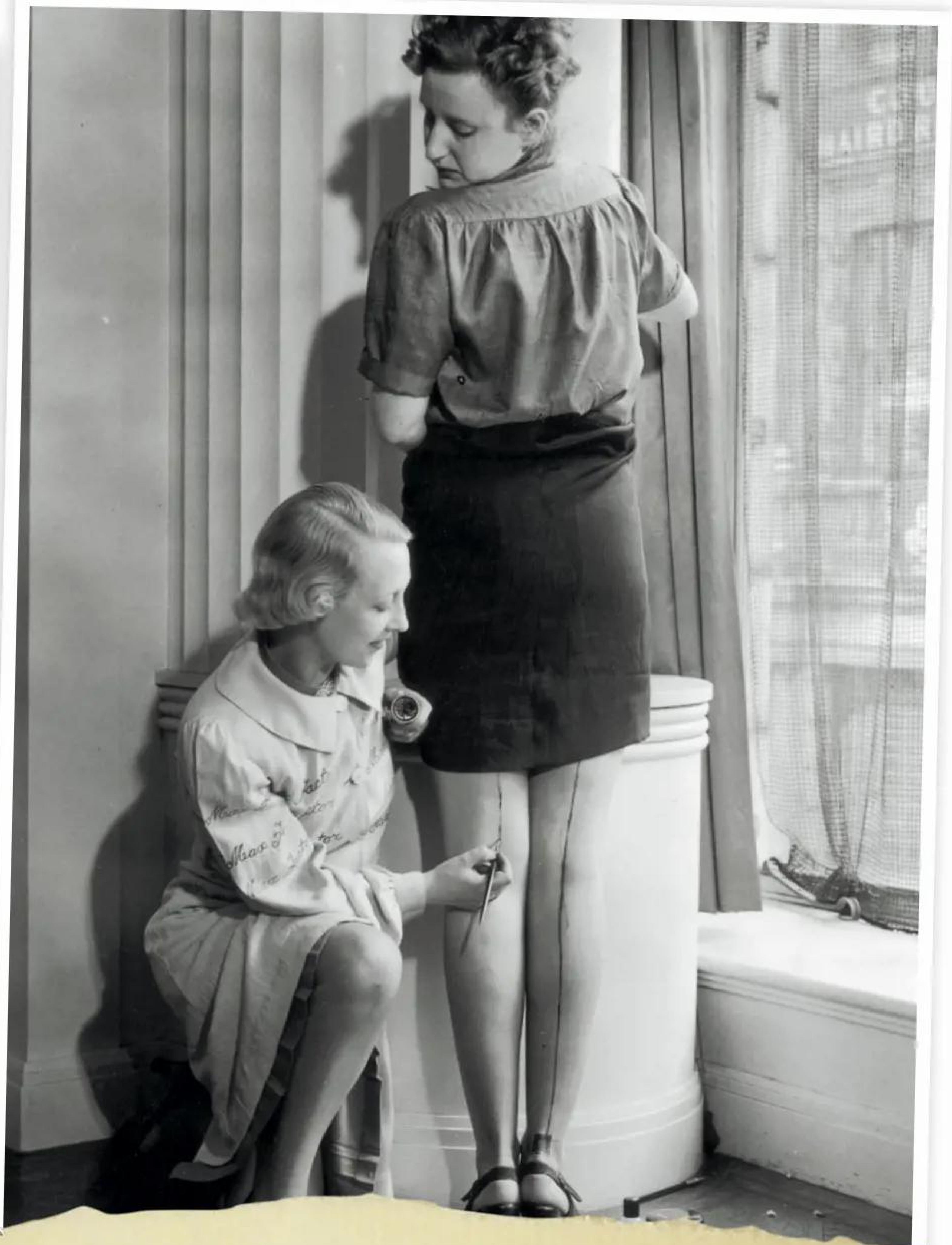
Although fish and seafood were not rationed and were theoretically available for anyone to buy, they were often very hard to come by. They were also expensive because commercial fishermen were paid a premium due to the fact they were at risk of enemy attack while out at sea. Crab was a particularly popular British delicacy, and although it could usually be easily sourced in coastal areas, it wasn't always available to buy elsewhere. Keen cooks attempted to replicate crab by adding grated cheese, salad dressing and vinegar to eggs scrambled in margarine. Although this mixture bore very little resemblance to the genuine article, it was still considered to be a rather pleasant sandwich filling.

> "Women would paint their legs with cold tea or even gravy to replicate the look of silk stockings"

MAKEUP

USE BEETROOT INSTEAD OF LIPSTICK FOR A PATRIOTIC RED LIP

Although the wearing of obvious makeup had been frowned upon in some quarters before the war, after 1939 it came to be regarded as an act of defiance in the face of the deprivations the enemy was attempting to impose, both physically and emotionally, upon the British people. Women were encouraged to look their very best in order to boost morale and demonstrate how undaunted they were by the war. However, as cosmetics became increasingly difficult to find, women were forced to improvise by using beetroot or dampened red ribbons to colour their lips and cheeks. More intrepid fashionistas used boot polish instead of mascara, while others dug out their old watercolour sets and used the pigments on their eyes, cheeks and lips. Talcum powder or even, in an emergency, flour might be used as setting powder afterwards. As a finishing touch, many women liked to add a dab of vanilla essence behind the ears instead of perfume.



FAKE STOCKINGS

SUBSTITUTE COLD TEA OR GRAVY FOR SILK STOCKINGS

In the pre-war years it was considered unladylike for women to be seen out and about with bare legs, and so stockings, usually made of silk or nylon, were widely worn. However, with the outbreak of hostilities the materials used for stockings were redirected for the war effort, making them extremely difficult to source. This meant that women were forced to improvise in order to replicate the same look, especially those serving in an official capacity who were forbidden to sport bare legs with their uniforms. Painting the legs with cold tea or even gravy was a popular approach to this dilemma, while many women went even further and carefully drew a straight line up the back of each leg to replicate a stocking seam – it was obviously much easier to achieve a perfect line if you got someone else to draw it for you!

FAKE MAYONNAISE

MAKE MAYONNAISE WITH MASHED POTATO INSTEAD OF EGGS

Eggs were often in short supply, with most people only being allowed one egg each every fortnight. This caused many problems for home cooks as they were a mainstay of the British diet, with many dishes relying on their inclusion. During the winter months eggs might not be available at all, which meant cooks had to be really crafty if they wanted to make a recipe that needed them. Mayonnaise, which relies on the inclusion of eggs, could be particularly difficult, especially if lemons were also in short supply. Many people substituted eggs for a small amount of mashed potato, which would be mixed with vinegar, mustard and cooking oil then seasoned with salt and pepper.

Images: Getty Images, Pexels/Pixabay, Alexsandro Rosa de Mello, Couleur, Markus Spiske, Wiki James Petts, jules, Ben P L, National Archives

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Working their way through the rubble of houses obliterated by high-explosive bombs, these residents of a Midlands road are the survivors of a raid that killed several people in January 1941. Birmingham would suffer 77 air raids during the war.

Image: Getty Images

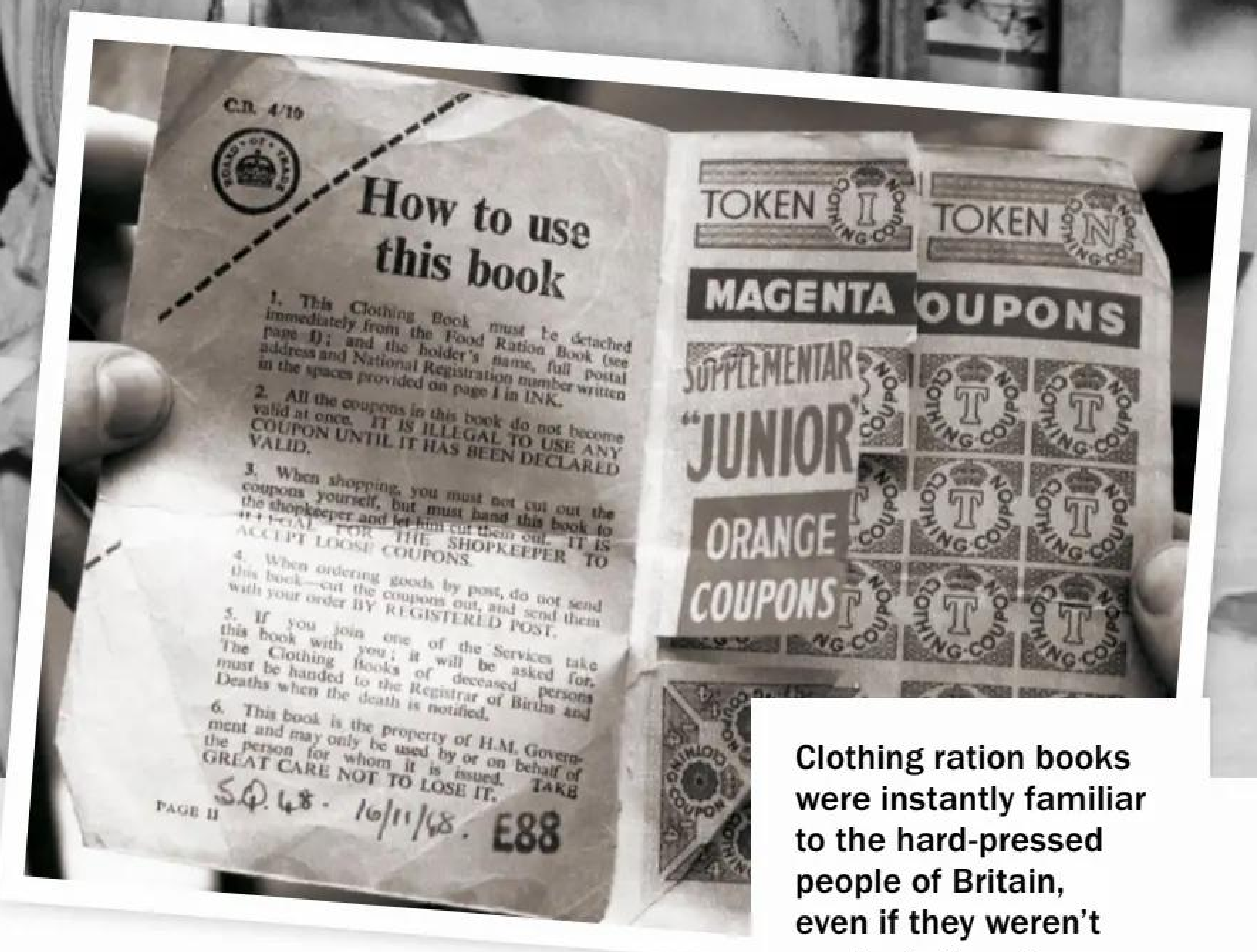
MAKE DO AND MEND

In WWII, fashion was on the ration, but that didn't stop the ladies of Britain from finding ways to keep their wardrobe up to date, with a few handy pointers from the Ministry of Information

WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON**

n your WARDROBE first
PLANNING A WARTIME LAYETTE – 1
Stretch the extra coupons as far as possible

Women came together at Make Do and Mend centres to share skills and exchange remodelled garments



C.D. 4/10

How to use this book

1. This Clothing Book must be detached immediately from the Food Ration Book (see page 1); and the holder's name, full postal address and National Registration number written in the spaces provided on page I in INK.

2. All the coupons in this book do not become valid at once. IT IS ILLEGAL TO USE ANY COUPON UNTIL IT HAS BEEN DECLARED VALID.

3. When shopping, you must not cut out the coupons yourself, but must hand this book to the shopkeeper and let him cut them out. IT IS ILLEGAL FOR THE SHOPKEEPER TO ACCEPT LOOSE COUPONS.

4. When ordering goods by post, do not send this book—cut the coupons out, and send them with your order BY REGISTERED POST.

5. If you join one of the Services take this book with you; it will be asked for. The Clothing Books of deceased persons must be handed to the Registrar of Births and Deaths when the death is notified.

6. This book is the property of H.M. Government and may only be used by or on behalf of the person for whom it is issued. TAKE GREAT CARE NOT TO LOSE IT.

PAGE II

S.Q. 48. 16/11/48. E88

Clothing ration books were instantly familiar to the hard-pressed people of Britain, even if they weren't particularly welcome

During wartime, the people of Great Britain faced deprivation in every area of life, with rationing introduced for many things that had previously been taken for granted. On 1 June 1941, new clothing was finally rationed too and would remain so until as late as 1949. Yet for a nation already used to making the best of things, this was just one more opportunity to show off a bit of imagination and ingenuity to keep clothes fresh and wardrobes up to date, even as the garments in them grew older and older.

The reason for clothing rationing was simple. With more and more civilians taking jobs in the military, suddenly uniforms were everywhere, and Britain's textile manufacturing industry turned its focus firmly towards war production. It was a matter of priorities: uniform took precedence over civilian clothing at a time of war. When the president of the Board of Trade, Oliver Lyttelton, announced clothes rationing, he took the country entirely by surprise, but the system that would be employed in this new arrangement would be entirely familiar to civilians. From now on each item of clothing was assigned a value of points according to the amount of materials and labour needed to produce it. These points were translated into the number of coupons needed to purchase an item, along with an amount of money, such as 11 coupons for a dress or eight for a man's shirt. Initially every adult was given an annual allocation of 66 coupons, but by 1946 this had shrunk down to a meagre 24 coupons. While children's clothes cost fewer coupons, growing children got through far more clothes, so they were allocated an additional ten coupons to make clothing them a little easier, while the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) set up clothing exchanges to help mothers meet the needs of their growing children.

On 2 July 1941, the Board of Trade published *Extension of the Life of Clothing – A Preliminary Investigation into Possibilities*, which was aimed at providing civilians with techniques to make their clothing last longer. However, it was the Make Do and Mend campaign of 1942 that really captured the imagination of the nation. This collaborative scheme between the Board of Trade and a number of voluntary groups including the National Council of Social Services, the Women's Group on Public Welfare, and the Women's Institute (WI) was intended to educate people in dressmaking and tailoring, knitting, needlework, garment mending, care and storage. By proper utilisation of these skills, people would be able to make their own clothes from scratch, mend those that were damaged or adapt old garments into new. It was to prove invaluable. In a country that had been making do for a while already, the scheme was received with enthusiasm and people pitched in, ready as ever to do their bit.

In 1943, the Ministry of Information released a newsreel to support the Make Do and Mend campaign, offering advice on how to make the best of the current situation and learn new skills

> *"Clothing rationing was a chance to show off a bit of imagination and ingenuity"*

The siren suit

A FAVOURITE OF WINSTON CHURCHILL, THE SIREN SUIT WAS A MUST-HAVE GARMENT OF WWII

In wartime Britain the air raid sirens could sound at any moment, so civilians looked for a garment that would provide cover and warmth if they suddenly had to run for the shelters. The clothing industry answered with the siren suit. Similar to a boiler suit, the siren suit was a one-piece garment that could be worn thrown on over everyday clothing in a matter of moments. It had breast pockets, pleats in the back and a belt; some, though not all, had hoods. It fastened with buttons or a zip and was made of a fabric that was readily available on the ration. Prime Minister Winston Churchill was the man who popularised the siren suit, becoming an unlikely trendsetter in the process. He even had one in pinstripes, for those more formal occasions. He even wore a siren suit when visiting the White House in January 1942.

Though the suits were initially marketed as being easy to throw on in the event of a raid, when it came to selling siren suits or patterns to women to make them at home, the garment industry didn't focus on air raids but fashion. Women were depicted wearing the suit not to run for shelter but to pose and socialise. With accessories, victory rolls and a slick of lipstick, the siren suit became another way for women to express individuality. Comfortable and practical, they could be dressed up or down as the wearer demanded.

Siren suits were popular with children for their practicality and warmth too, making them a truly universal garment.

One of Churchill's siren suits was displayed at Blenheim Palace to celebrate his 150th anniversary

A shopper looks through a rack of women's Utility suits in London in 1942

that would make life much easier. The focus was very much on the 'can do' approach of a nation that was pulling together. It wasn't a question of if one could learn the new skills required but how one would implement them. It wasn't only women and housewives who were expected to learn either; everyone was encouraged to improve their skills.

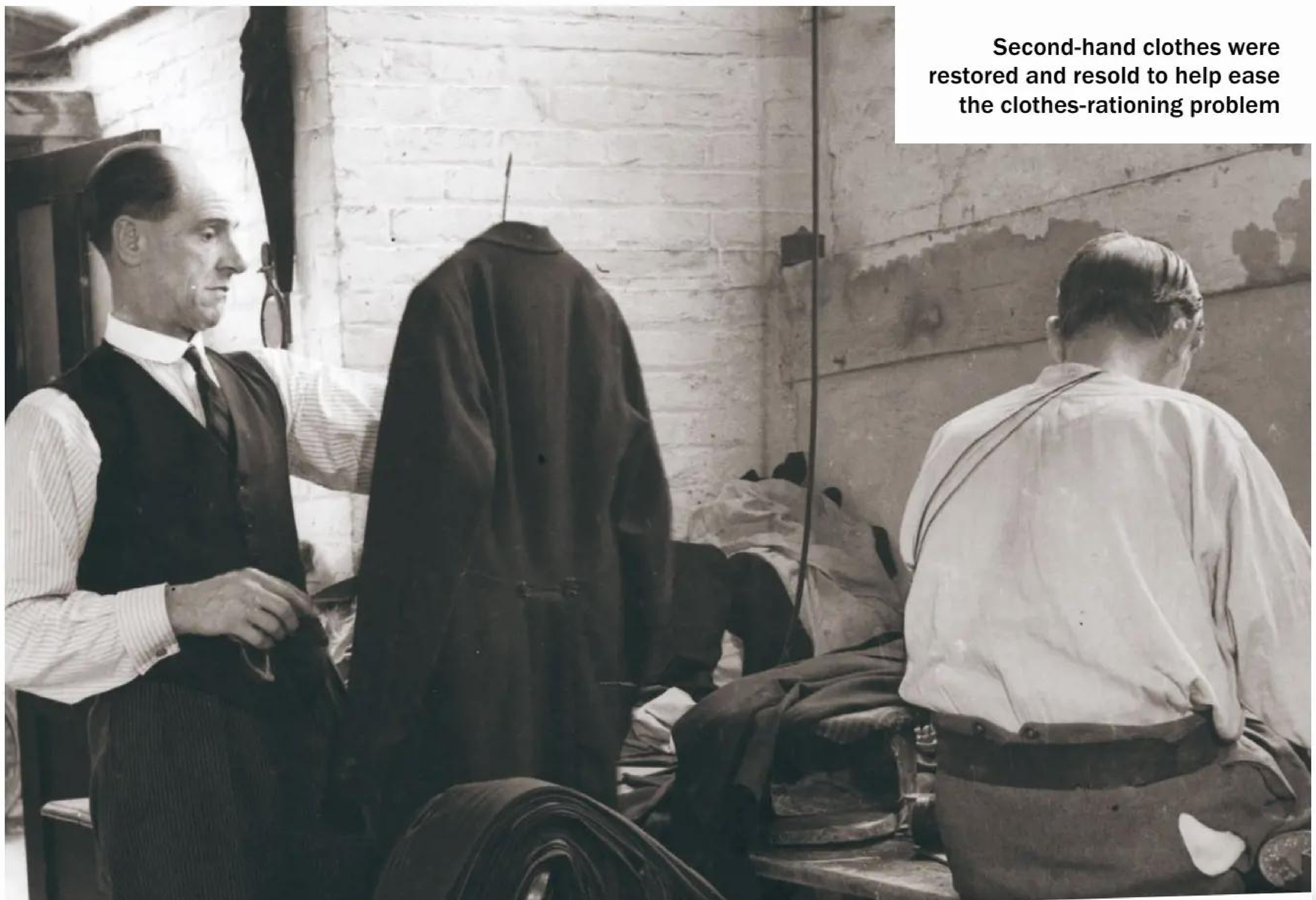
The Board of Trade published a booklet in support of the scheme in 1943, offering practical suggestions, advice and easy-to-follow tips for the novice. In order to give the policy a friendly face, a character named Mrs Sew And Sew was introduced in booklets and on posters, soon becoming instantly recognisable as she offered hints and advice to her audience. This friendly little doll was a skilled dressmaker and mender, and as well as her instructional leaflets and posters, she came to life via animation to encourage people to pick up a needle and thread. Making clothes was cheaper and cost fewer coupons than buying ready-made garments, and people soon began to find novel ways to expand their wardrobes.

Knitting became a hugely popular pastime, but even that took coupons to buy wool, so old blankets and holed sweaters were unravelled so their wool could be reused. Some canny customers brought up vast lengths of unrationed darning thread and used it to knit or crochet garments until the government got wise and

Utility clothing didn't mean drab; these Norman Hartnell-designed pieces offered a designer experience at a fraction of the price

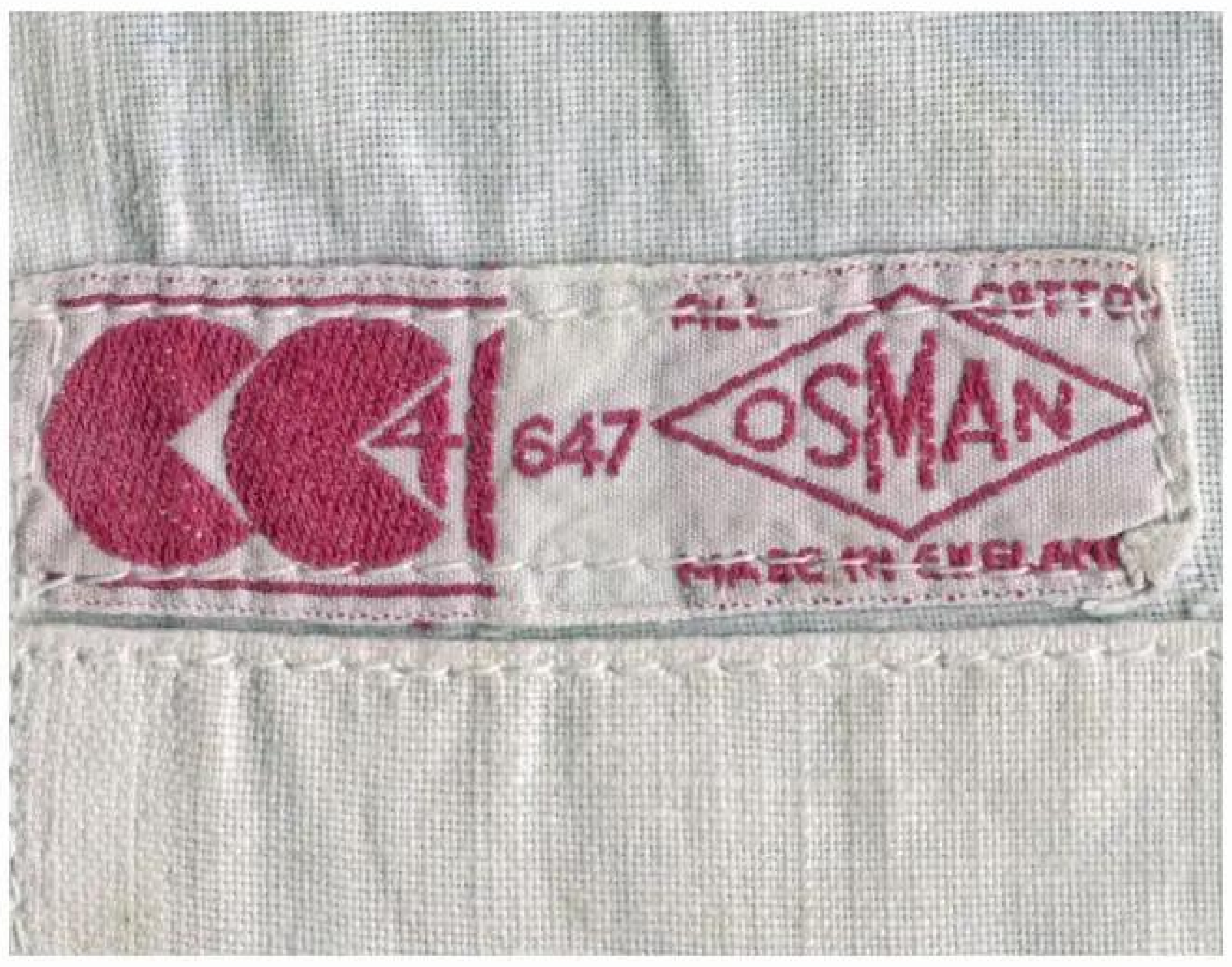
> *"It wasn't only women and housewives who were expected to learn"*

Utility Suits
97/5



Second-hand clothes were restored and resold to help ease the clothes-rationing problem

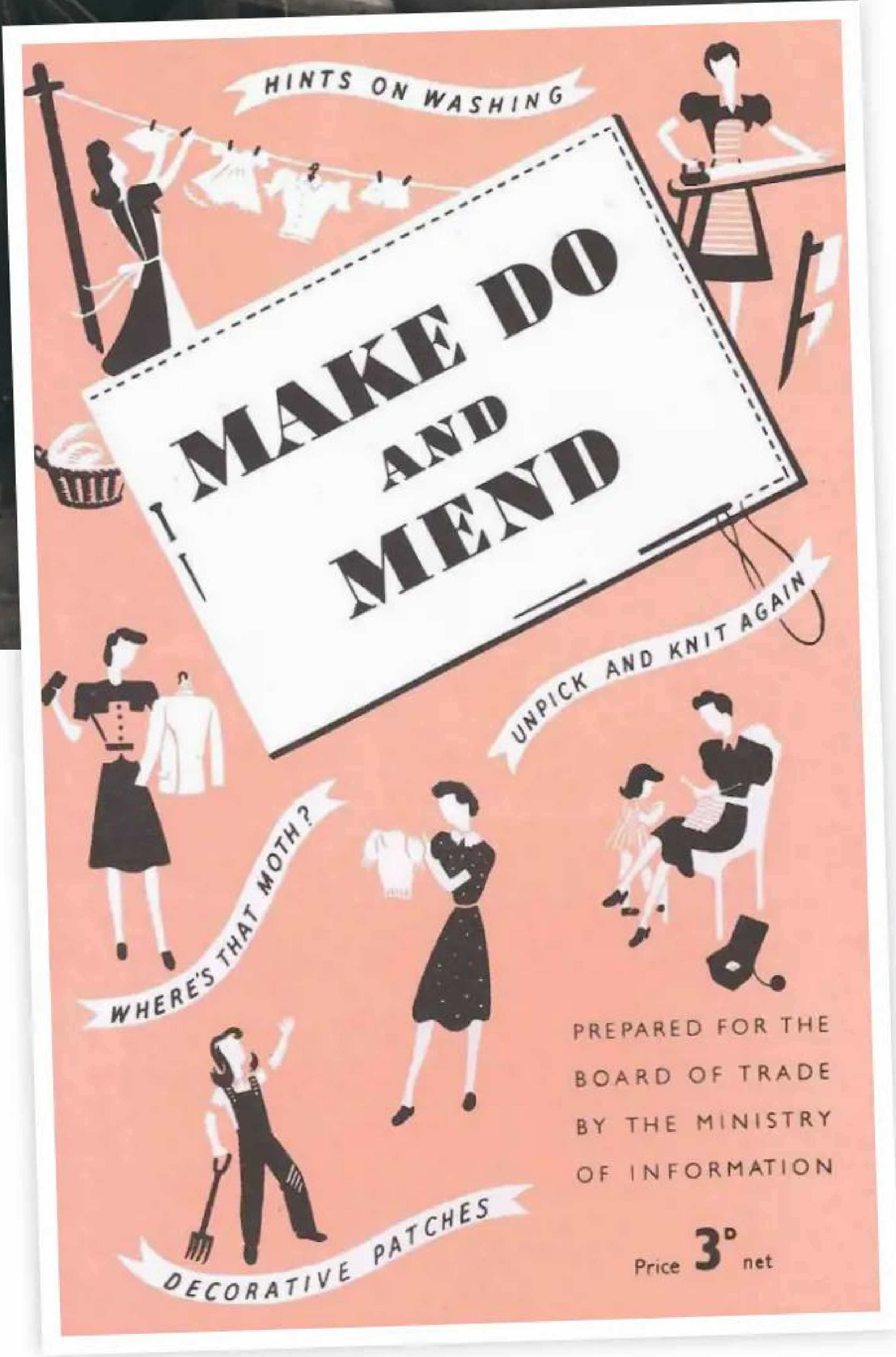
started selling it in shorter lengths instead. From unrationed fabrics such as blackout curtains to old sheets and bedclothes, people used everything they had in pursuit of the make do and mend ethos. For the wives and mothers of men who had gone off in uniform and left their wardrobes behind, meanwhile, there were rich pickings to be found as those abandoned male suits became smart jackets and skirts for the women of the house. Perhaps most famously of all, silk escape maps issued to Allied aircrew found a new life as lingerie, having been sold off by the government when no longer needed or even handed over as a romantic gift. Throughout the war parachute silk was highly sought after for lingerie, nightgowns and wedding dresses, though it was not easy to come by. With elastic in very short supply, women's knickers were one of a very limited number of civilian garments that allowed the use of elastic throughout the war.



Utility clothing was instantly recognisable by its CC41 label, guaranteeing affordable quality

Just as the country had pulled together since the start of the war, it did so in the era of Make Do and Mend too. The press enthusiastically supported the campaign, devoting acres of newsprint to practical guides on pattern cutting and dressmaking, as well as caring for and mending garments, not to mention seeing off moths. Meanwhile, those who had the will but not the skill could attend free evening classes taught by the WI and the WVS, where expertise could be exchanged and new techniques learned. Of course, these classes served another valuable purpose too, creating a social space for women to spend time outside of the home while still doing their bit.

All of this may suggest that the people of Britain must have looked rather tatty during wartime, but nothing could be further from the truth. By learning new skills, sharing their expertise and employing some old-fashioned ingenuity, those who embraced the spirit of make do and mend could mimic fashionable looks on a budget. But there were other options too, some of them offering a surprisingly designer experience at a bargain price.



The Ministry of Information's Make Do and Mend pamphlet was a how-to guide for dealing with everything from a difficult darn to the "moth menace"

From 1941, the 'Utility' clothing range came on the market, which was a government scheme to produce smart and wearable clothes using a very limited range of textiles. Though basic, they were well-made and attractive clothes that offered excellent value for money. The Utility label became even more attractive in 1942 when the Board of Trade partnered with the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers to commission designers including Norman Hartnell and Hardy Amies to design Utility items. Suddenly, one could buy designer looks on the ration. Offering great value for

Feed-sack fashion

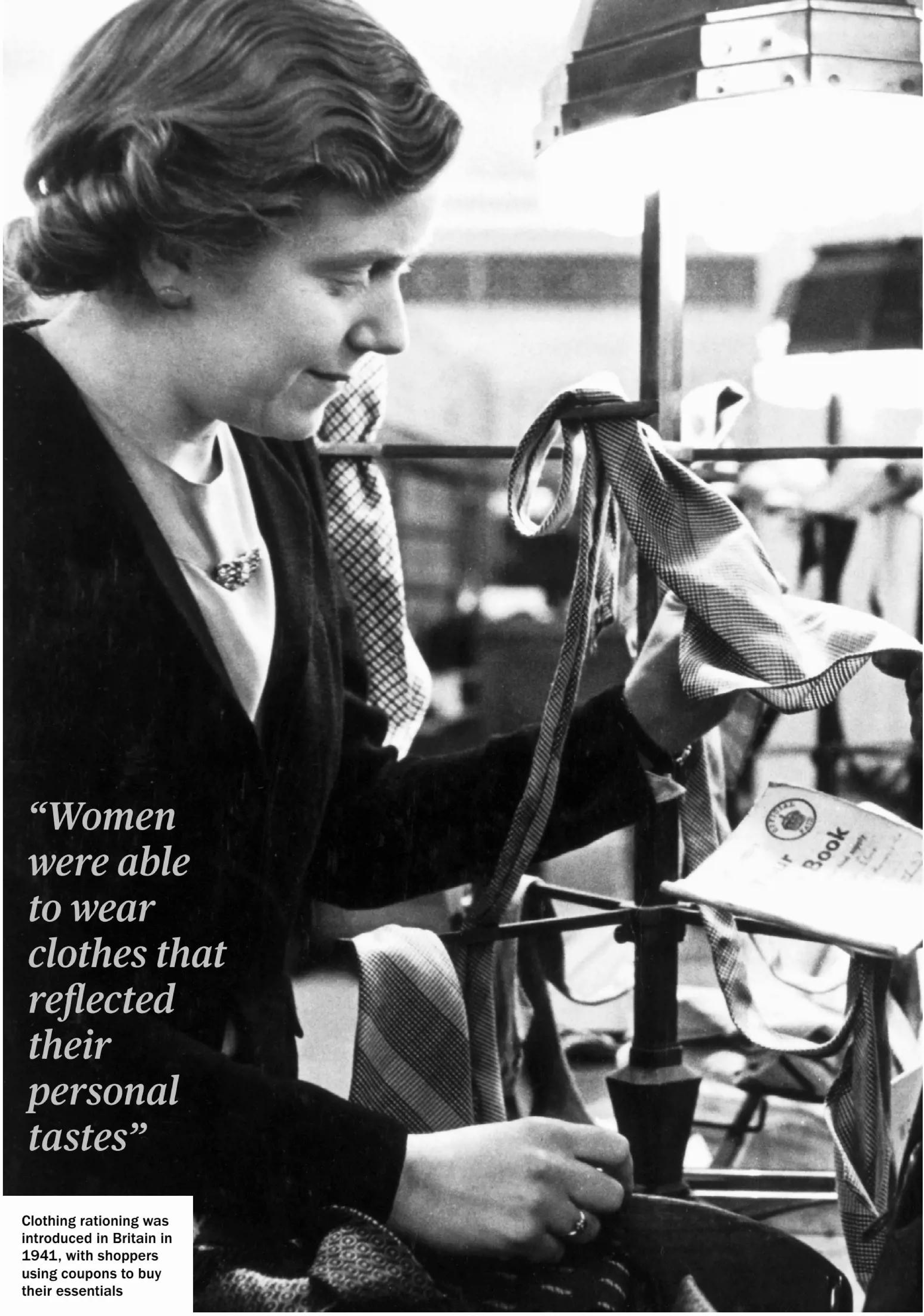
MAKE DO AND MEND WASN'T THE FIRST TIME A LITTLE INGENUITY WAS REQUIRED WHEN IT CAME TO WARDROBES

When the Great Depression swept America, it brought with it utter devastation; even the simplest item became a luxury, and for many, buying new dresses was unthinkable. With 'making do' becoming a national necessity, women began to use cotton flour and feed sacks to make clothes for themselves and their children. Once the flour manufacturers learned how their sacks were being utilised, they began to print brightly coloured patterns on the sacks, along with instructions for how to wash the sacks prior to turning them into garments. Even better, these instructions were printed using an ink that would wash out, while the patterns would not.

The national press got on board and published tips and tricks for using the sacks to their full potential, and soon they were everywhere. Virtually indistinguishable from regular fabrics, they offered families the chance to make their own clothing that was bright and colourful. In a time when life was gruelling, it was an important way of ensuring that people could maintain dignity and face the world looking put-together and confident.

The intricate, often beautiful or playful patterns remained in use until the war years, when cotton sacks were replaced by paper, as cotton was needed for the war effort. Yet for more than a decade these sacks became not only clothes, but bedsheets, curtains and other textiles too. Today they are on display in some of the greatest museums in the world, a testament to the skill, talent and ingenuity of the women of Depression-era America.

This dress was made by Dorothy Overall of Kansas and demonstrates how a humble feed sack could become a beautiful garment



Clothing rationing was introduced in Britain in 1941, with shoppers using coupons to buy their essentials

> *"Women were able to wear clothes that reflected their personal tastes"*

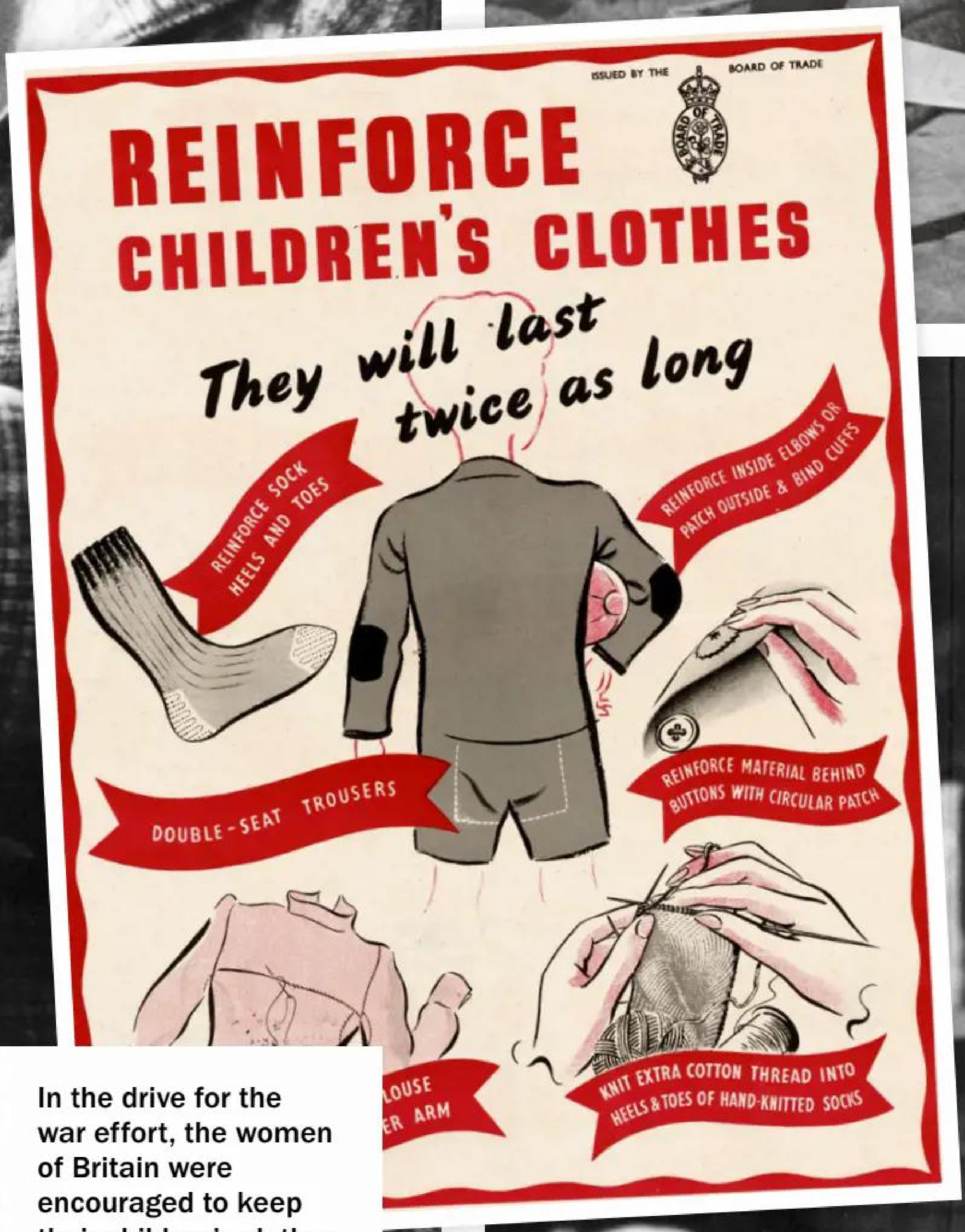
money and coupons, customers knew that any garment bearing the Utility label 'CC41' carried with it a guarantee of quality and value.

For women in the workplace who weren't issued with overalls or uniform, make do and mend was an invaluable skill. They were able to create garments to wear in a professional setting from those that they or their men already owned. Alternatively, they could pick up one of the many Utility garments on offer, perhaps buying an Edward Molyneux-designed coat for 30 shillings (£1.10s), as opposed to the £30 it would have cost before the war. Individual style flourished and women were able to wear clothes that reflected their personal tastes, including homemade jewellery and accessories. Though looking too showy wasn't recommended, lest people thought someone was taking more than their share, looking put-together was encouraged. Standards were not supposed to slip just because there was a war on.

As the war progressed, restrictions grew ever tighter, and in 1942 and 1943 the government issued the Making-up of the Civilian Clothing (Restrictions) Orders to further minimise costs and materials. Men saw their lapel sizes slashed and the double-breasted suit banned, with fashionable trouser turn-ups banned outright, leading some to dodge the ban by deliberately buying trousers that were too long and having them taken up by make do and menders, conveniently creating turn-ups in the process.

The era of make do and mend far outlasted the war and created a generation of women who

The Women's Voluntary Service set up clothing exchanges to help mothers clothe their growing children



ISSUED BY THE BOARD OF TRADE

REINFORCE CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

They will last twice as long

REINFORCE SOCK HEELS AND TOES

REINFORCE INSIDE ELBOWS OR PATCH OUTSIDE & BIND CUFFS

DOUBLE-SEAT TROUSERS

REINFORCE MATERIAL BEHIND BUTTONS WITH CIRCULAR PATCH

LOUSE ER ARM

KNIT EXTRA COTTON THREAD INTO HEELS & TOES OF HAND-KNITTED SOCKS

In the drive for the war effort, the women of Britain were encouraged to keep their children's clothes going for as long as possible

With an increase in cycling during the war due to petrol rationing, women's fashion began to change

carried with them a litany of garment creation and care skills. The legacy of the Utility scheme, which ended in 1952, was that of a public who now demanded quality at a good price, leading to new regulations in the garment industry and the flourishing of department stores.

Though it was through necessity rather than choice or design, make do and mend led to a new culture of sustainability, a world away from the fast and disposable fashion of the 21st century. Most importantly of all, it showed just what the women of Britain could do with even the humblest ingredients and skills, creating smart, up-to-the-minute looks out of virtually nothing. There might well have a been a war on, but that wasn't going to halt the unstoppable march of fashion.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

UNDERGROUND

THE FORGOTTEN WORK OF THE BEVIN BOYS

Not all conscripts were sent to the front – thousands toiled deep within Britain's mines as the country teetered on the brink of an energy crisis

WORDS **CALLUM MCKELVIE**

From 1943 to 1948, 48,000 men were given the task of ensuring that the production of Britain's coal mines continued uninterrupted. Nicknamed 'Bevin Boys' by the British press due to the scheme being a pet project of Minister for Labour Ernest Bevin, these were fit and able young men between the ages of 18 and 25 who had been selected for National Service. However, instead of being sent to fight the Axis powers, they soon found themselves with boots and a hard hat, working deep within Britain's mines.

Nineteen forty-three was a year of major turning points in WWII. On 2 February, on the Eastern Front, Soviet troops had been able to liberate Stalingrad after the city had spent almost a year under siege. On 13 May, the German and Italian troops' in Tunis surrendered, ending the fighting in North Africa. In September, Allied troops successfully took Sicily and the invasion of Italy was able to begin in earnest. By Christmas, it seemed as though the tide was finally beginning to turn in the Allies' favour.

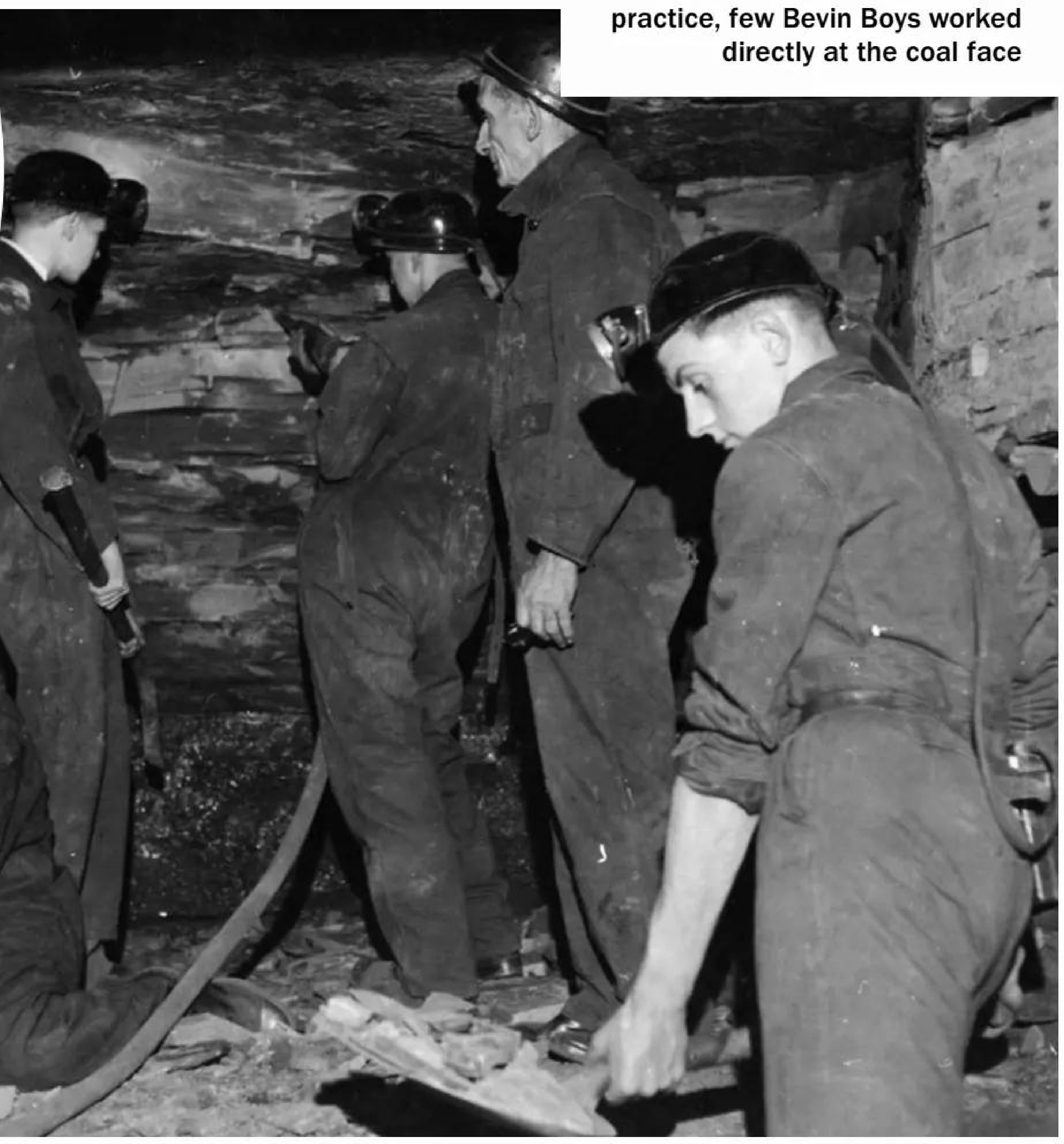
But back in Britain, trouble was brewing. In December 1943, it was made clear to the wartime coalition that not only was Britain short of the 40,000 miners it needed to maintain coal production, but that the current supply for the entirety of the country amounted to only three weeks' worth. At such a crucial moment in the war, it was vital that Britain's energy supplies continue on uninterrupted.

Ernest Bevin was all too aware of this problem. Attempts had already been made to boost the number of Britain's miners through both a volunteer scheme and an increase to minimum wage, to no avail. Desperate, and with no other option, Bevin decreed that a percentage of men called up for national service would instead be sent to work as miners. How these men were chosen was simple. Beginning on 14 December, a ballot was drawn in which if the last digits of a man's national insurance number matched that of a number drawn from a hat, they would be selected to work as a miner. Purportedly, Bevin's own Homburg hat was used for the draw.

The selected 'Bevin Boy' would then be sent to one of a number of training centres throughout Britain. Here they would receive six weeks of training in the form of classroom style tutorials and practical training in the mines themselves. They would also receive physical training to ensure they were fit and healthy for the work that lay ahead. Each Bevin Boy was given equipment suitable for his conscription, including overalls, boots and a helmet. The majority of Bevin Boys were housed in 'Bevin Hostels', specially constructed Nissen Huts, single-storey cylindrical-shaped buildings with corrugated iron roofs.

Bevin Boys undergoing training near Canterbury in 1944. In practice, few Bevin Boys worked directly at the coal face

Ernest Bevin came up with the scheme of using conscripted men in Britain's mines



Although there were some exceptions, the majority of Bevin Boys rarely worked on the coal face and usually manned other equipment, such as the conveyor belt that took the coal out of the mine. According to author Mike Osbourne, other tasks a Bevin Boy might have been expected to undertake were in "transport, maintenance, or in electrical engineering roles". The intention was for the Bevin Boys to occupy less-skilled positions and for the experienced miners to work on the coal face.

But this does not mean that the life of a Bevin Boy was easy, as they were subject to abuse from their fellow miners, the public and even the British constabulary. Crucially, Bevin Boys were given no uniform or insignia to denote their conscription. In public, insults were hurled their way from a bitter population who believed them to be draft dodgers. What was more, their lack of identification meant they were often stopped by police and subjected to checks. As the Bevin Boys were conscripted, there was also immense pressure placed on them to show up to work, with any absence punishable by a 30-shilling fine – or imprisonment.

Despite these problems, the Bevin Boys were a crucial part of the war effort and the scheme continued until March 1948. Sadly, following the end of WWII, the majority of government records relating to the scheme were destroyed. Unlike other conscripts, the Bevin Boys received no medals of recognition or even a letter of demobilisation. In 2008, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown attempted to right this wrong by formally recognising the work of the Bevin Boys during the war. During a special ceremony, 'commemorative badges' were awarded to 27 former Bevin Boys.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

DEVILS IN THE DARK

CRIME IN BLACKOUT LONDON

As Britain plunged itself into darkness, it wasn't just the German bombs civilians had to fear…

WORDS **CALLUM MCKELVIE**

In early September 1939, as Hitler's armies advanced into Poland, the British Government ramped up its preparations for war. One of its concerns surrounded the threat of aerial attacks by the Luftwaffe – Nazi Germany's air force. Technology had developed a great deal since the Zeppelin airship raids of WWI, and the Luftwaffe had already demonstrated its deadly capabilities during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).

As part of Britain's air defence, measures were taken on the ground to limit the effectiveness of German air raids. One of these was the blackout, the strict policy of extinguishing all light during the nighttime hours in order to make it harder for German pilots to identify their targets. But what the government did not anticipate was the number of criminals who quickly took advantage of the newly darkened streets to harass, steal, rape and murder.

Historian Amy Helen Bell has meticulously researched this period, attempting to shine a light on the many horrific murders and crimes in her book Under Cover of Darkness: Murders in Blackout London. "My first doctoral work was on the London Blitz, exploring how civilians experienced it as the first total war against an unseen enemy," she tells us.

"In researching this I came across a particular case in which a man murdered his wife and attempted to make it appear as if she had been the victim of a German bomb. I knew there had to be many more similar cases."

The blackout begins

The blackout was announced on 1 September 1939 – the same day that German troops marched into Poland. Two days later, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain solemnly declared that Britain was now at war. On 16 October, the first of many German air raids occurred. The purpose of these raids was

> *"Alongside the thieves and black marketeers there were other, far more sinister criminals at work in wartime London: serial killers"*

twofold: they aimed to destroy strategic targets that were vital to Britain's war effort while also damaging the morale of the British population and thereby their will to resist.

While the Royal Air Force (RAF) took to the skies to fight the invaders and anti-aircraft guns targeted enemy planes from the ground, blackout measures plunged Britain's cities into darkness. The RAF conducted a series of tests that concluded that even its own pilots struggled to identify landmarks when London was shrouded in darkness. As a result, street lamps were left unlit, homes used thick blackout curtains and car headlights were covered with tape so only a thin sliver of light lit the way.

"The blackout comes before any bombing raids actually occurred, it's announced even before war is officially declared," Bell explains. "The first impact of the blackout on civilian life in London is a huge increase in road accidents [1,130 in September 1939 alone compared to 544 the previous year according to the Imperial War Museum]. Then, of course, there is a huge increase in property crime and, in the following years, in black market crime."

Crime wave

Criminals began to take advantage of the wartime measure almost as soon as the blackout began. An article in The Scotsman newspaper dated 2 October 1939 detailed how the first month of darkness had seen an unprecedented increase in crime in Edinburgh. The Scotsman stated the city had been "hit by a black-out crime 'wave' which caused considerable perturbance," before declaring that shops were targeted by "smash-and-grab raiders" who looted items such as "bicycles, tinned foods, jewellery, clothing and other sundry articles".

These criminals would often use ingenious methods to avoid being caught. "Thieves would disguise themselves by putting on air raid warden uniforms," says Bell. "If they were discovered they would pretend that they were

Throughout WWII London was subjected to blackout restrictions each night

Robert Fabian (left) with famous hangman Albert Pierrepoint. Fabian was a renowned inspector whose career began during the war

clearing out bomb debris, but in reality they were looting shops."

The strictly enforced rationing of essential items such as sugar, meat, cheese and butter, which began in January 1940, soon led to a flourishing trade on the black market. The selling of once freely available items that were now scarce could be highly lucrative. According to *The Guardian*, gangster Billy Hill was able to sell sausage skins for £500 a barrel, roughly £3,000 in today's money.

But this was not all that the police had to deal with, and as the war waged on new forms of crime began to appear, particularly in London.

"In the second half of the war, especially when American and other foreign servicemen are on leave in London, there is a huge increase in violent crime," Bell explains. "These soldiers also have guns and suddenly more firearms begin to appear on the black market. The result is an almost exponential increase in violence.

"One of the cases that really struck me was the case of Phillip Berry. He was a British-Nigerian sailor who had already been jailed for assaulting his partner. He witnesses a racist Dutch sailor abusing an African American soldier and intervenes. Berry pulls a gun on the sailor, and when the sailor insults him too he shoots him dead. Originally, the court stated that the Dutch sailor's racist language was not legal provocation. Later, however, this was changed and Berry's [death] sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. It's a fascinating example of wartime anxieties surrounding race."

The Blackout Ripper

Alongside the thieves, black marketeers and trigger-happy troops, there were other, far more

The capital was targeted by the Luftwaffe 71 times during the conflict

sinister criminals at work in wartime London: serial killers.

"Gordon Cummins is the name that people associate most with wartime crime," says Bell. "He's an interesting case. He's in his late 20s, is in the RAF, has a good relationship with his wife and a good relationship with his parents. He's never been in serious trouble before. But suddenly, over the course of six days, he targets and kills numerous women."

Known as the 'Blackout Ripper', Cummins' first victim was discovered on the morning of 9 February 1942 when the body of 41-year-old Evelyn Hamilton was found in an air raid shelter. One day later, Evelyn Oatley was discovered in her flat in Soho, her corpse violently mutilated. Over the following two days Cummins killed two more women: Margaret Florence Lowe on the 11th and Doris Jouannet on the 12th.

Cummins then made two failed attempts to claim further victims, assaulting Catherine Mulcahy on the 12th (shortly before his murder of Jouannet) and Margaret Heywood on the 13th, leaving behind evidence in both cases. In his haste to leave Mulchany, he left his RAF webbing belt, and after his attack on Heywood he left behind his gas mask and haversack.

The haversack was to prove the crucial piece of evidence because Cummins' service number was scrawled inside it. He was arrested on 14 February, and when searching his quarters police officers uncovered a number of items he had taken from his murder victims, as well as a bloodstained shirt and traces of dust from the air raid shelter where Hamilton's body had been discovered. On 25 June 1942, Cummins was executed by famed executioner Albert Pierrepoint. The Blackout Ripper's brutal reign

Conflict killers

A NUMBER OF DEPRAVED PREDATORS WERE ACTIVE ACROSS THE GLOBE DURING WWII

BRUNO LÜDKE

GERMANY

Although most of Lüdke's murders were committed prior to the war, he continued to kill during the Nazis' reign of terror and is suspected to have slaughtered between 50 and 80 people. After his arrest he was subjected to gruesome medical experiments and died in Vienna in 1944 at the age of 36. However, Lüdke was mentally disabled and some have questioned whether he was actually responsible for the murders, or whether he may have been coerced into confessing to crimes he did not commit. "They would kill me if I didn't confess," he is alleged to have said.

LEONARDA CIANCIULLI

ITALY

When Cianciulli heard the news that war had broken out, like many mothers she was terrified that her son would be called up to fight. However, Cianciulli believed in the power of witchcraft. She killed three women and used their blood to make tea cakes, then melted down the body of her final victim to make soap in the belief that these grisly human sacrifices would save her son. She only confessed to her crimes when suspicion fell on him.

DR MARCEL PETIOT

FRANCE

By the time WWI began, it's suspected that Dr Petiot had already committed a number of murders. In Paris, he began offering help to Jews looking to flee the city, then injected them with poison and stole their money and valuables. Following his arrest in 1944, 30 bodies were discovered hidden in his home, and during his trial he confessed to some 60 murders. Even then, it was suspected he was responsible for many more.

EDDIE LEONSKI

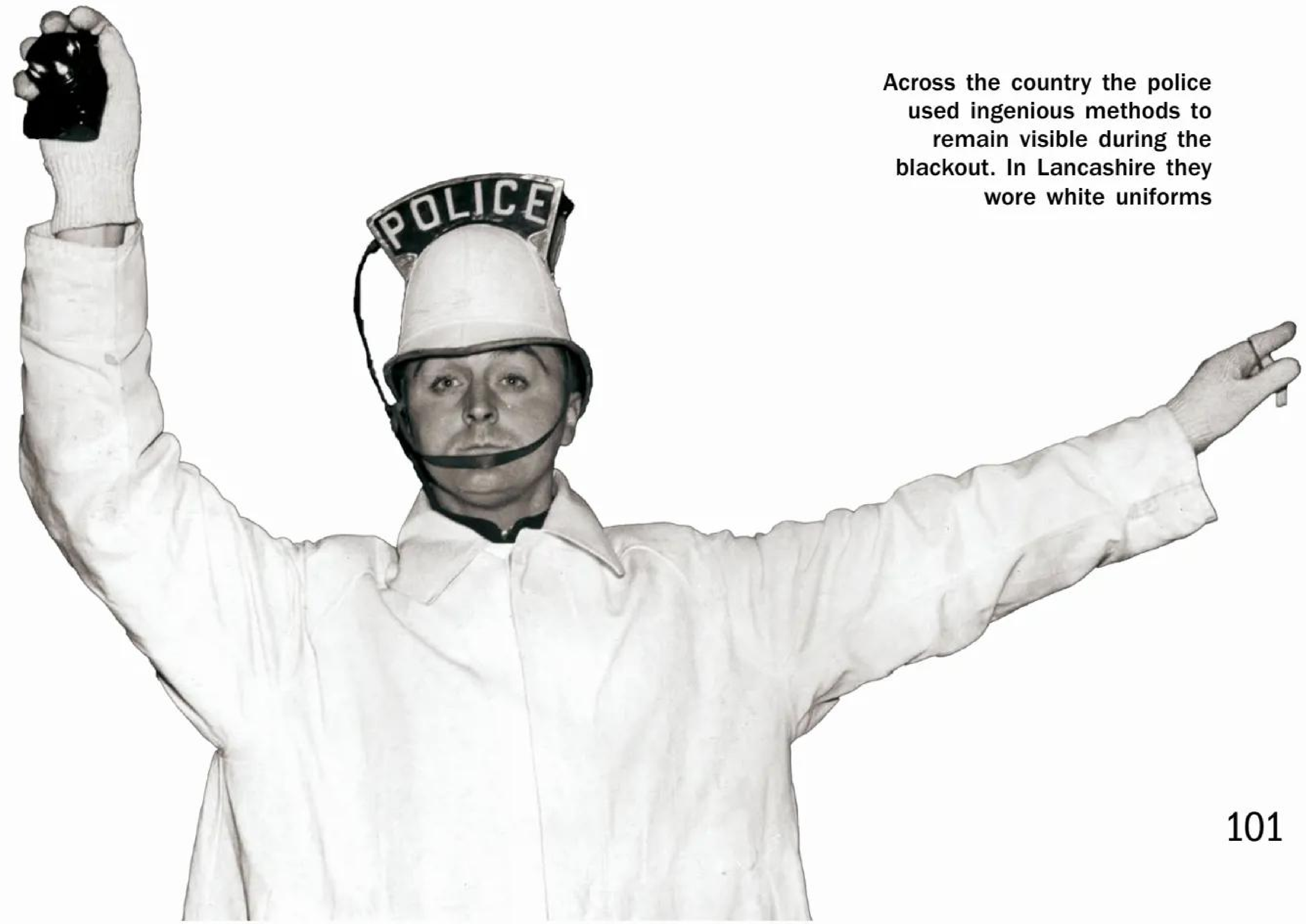
AUSTRALIA

Known as the Brownout Strangler, Leonski was an American soldier based in Melbourne, Australia, from 1942. During the war the city did not engage in full blackouts but instead dropped the voltage, leading to 'dim-outs' that were also referred to as 'brownouts'. During May 1942, Leonski strangled three women before he was caught. His trial was conducted under U.S. military law and he was sentenced to death, his execution taking place on 9 November 1942.

PAUL OGORZOW

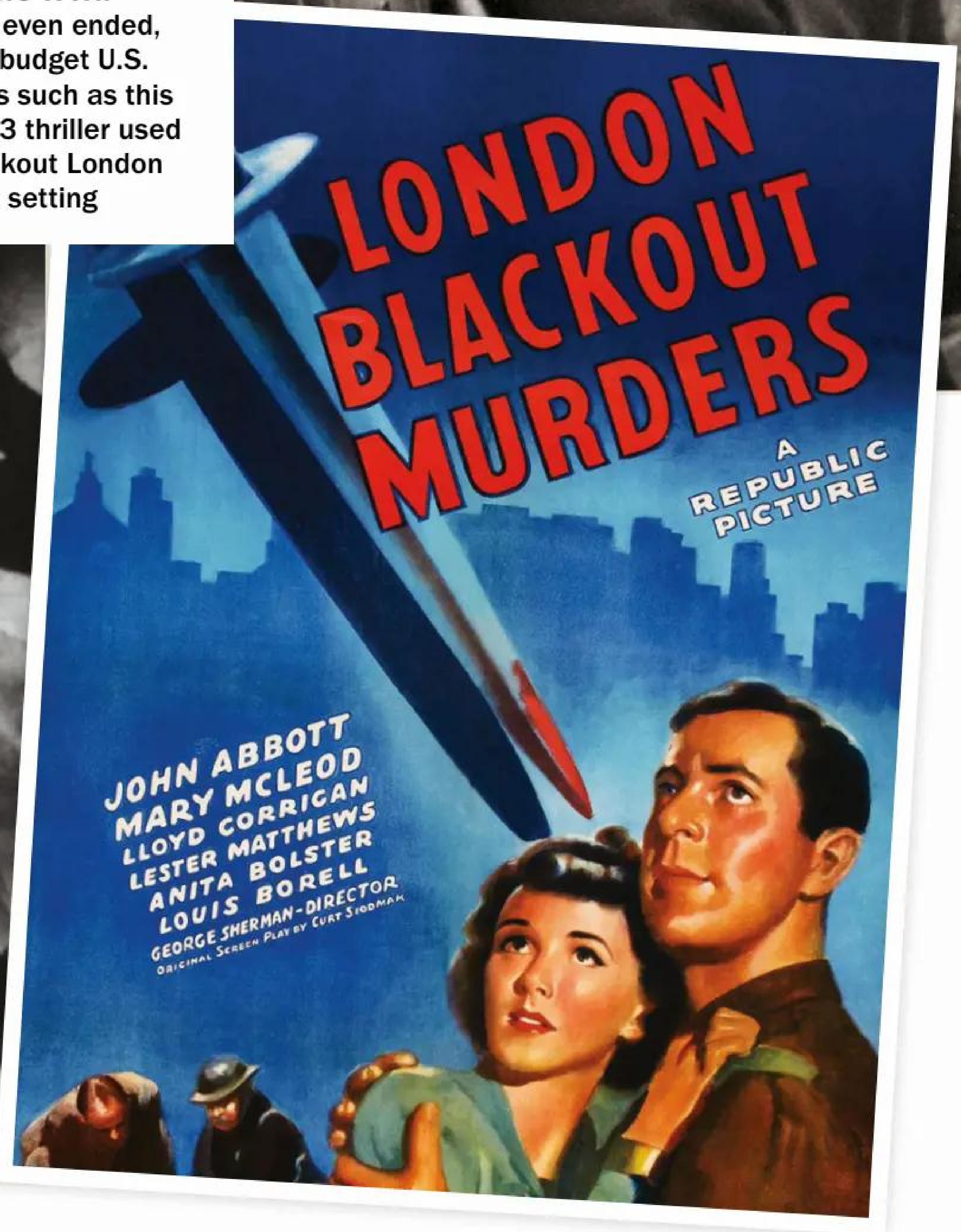
GERMANY

Ogorzow was a serial killer and rapist nicknamed the S-Bahn Murderer for his habit of using the S-Bahn railway where he worked to attack his victims. He took advantage of the blacked-out train carriages to target women travelling alone and who were not suspicious of a uniformed railway employee approaching them. After his arrest in 1941 he confessed to eight murders and was executed in Plotzensee Prison in Berlin.



Across the country the police used ingenious methods to remain visible during the blackout. In Lancashire they wore white uniforms

Serial killer John Christie murdered his first victims during WWII



Before WWII had even ended, low-budget U.S. films such as this 1943 thriller used blackout London as a setting

Gordon Frederick Cummins, the Blackout Ripper

of terror was finally over. But there were other killers still operating on the forboding streets of blackout London…

Police reaction

Catching ruthless criminals is hard enough in peacetime, and the authorities' task was made even more challenging because of the war. "The Metropolitan Police is protected [from military service], people could not be conscripted out of it, but that doesn't mean they don't volunteer," says Bell. "The force was down by several hundred, and on top of this 98 Metropolitan Police Officers are killed on duty by enemy action and 210 seriously injured. The City of London Police lost four men on active duty during the air raids."

The main solution to the Metropolitan Police's manpower problem was to use the First Police Reserve – retired officers who were brought back onto the force. Despite this, the Metropolitan force's staffing levels would remain low for the duration of the war and did not return to their normal levels until the late 1940s.

The over-stretched police force did its best to overcome its manpower shortage in the face of rising crime. "They are working incredibly hard," Bell tells us. "If you examine criminal files, for example missing person cases, there's an enormous attention to detail. If a body has been found and there's no direct witnesses, they'll still take as many statements as possible. So despite the perception that crime is out of control, when it comes to homicide investigation they are still working incredibly hard."

The Metropolitan Police also boasted a number of detectives who would go on to become particularly noteworthy after the war ended. "A lot of the detectives who get their start during the war later become big names in homicide investigation, for example Robert Fabian," Bell explains.

Better known as 'Fabian of the Yard', he would eventually reach the rank of superintendent and is best remembered as the detective who

Christie shown leaving court after his conviction

investigated the ‘witchcraft’ murder of Charles Walton in February 1945.

Following his retirement in 1949, Fabian became a household name. He wrote a number of books detailing his exploits that were later turned into a popular TV series titled *Fabian of the Yard*, which ran from 1954–56. In 1956, he even appeared on BBC radio’s *Desert Island Discs* (choosing an umbrella as his luxury item) and was a guest on the TV series *What’s My Line?* in 1951 and *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* in 1971.

Rillington Place Murders

Undoubtedly one of Britain’s most infamous killers, John Reginald Christie was responsible for the 10 Rillington Place murders. Although active until 1953, he is known to have murdered his first victim, Ruth Fuerst, sometime in August 1943. What was more, Christie utilised his position as a war reserve policeman to abuse his victims’ trust. “He’s known and trusted in the community,” says Bell. “He becomes friends with Fuerst and is able to entice her to his house. Once there, he strangles her.”

But Fuerst was not Christie’s only wartime victim. A year later, in October 1944, Christie convinced Muriel Amelia Eady to visit his home, where, after tricking her into breathing in domestic gas, he raped and strangled her. Both bodies were buried in the back garden of 10 Rillington Place, where Christie occupied the ground-floor flat. The remains of Fuerst and Eady would not be uncovered for almost a decade.

> *“On 23 April 1945, nearly six years after it began, the blackout was finally lifted”*

Between the end of the war and March 1953, Christie killed at least six more people. Among them were Beryl Evans, 20, and her one-year-old daughter, Geraldine, who occupied the top-floor flat. Tragically, husband and father Timothy Evans was arrested in 1949 and executed for the murder of Geraldine. This horrific miscarriage of justice not only sent an innocent man to his death, but it also allowed Christie to remain active for a further four years.

During this time he was able to claim several more victims, including his wife, Ethel. His reign of terror only ended when he was forced to move out of his flat by his landlord after he was discovered subletting it to another couple. When a tenant in a different property was given permission to use the now-empty kitchen, he discovered the remains of several of Christie’s victims hidden inside an alcove. A police investigation then found the remains of Fuerst and Eady buried in the garden. Christie was executed on 15 July 1953.

In 1969, Britain formerly abolished capital punishment for murder. In 2004, after a long campaign by Evans’ family to have his conviction quashed, judges dismissed their appeal but did state that Evans should now be considered innocent of both murders. Justice Collins said, “The material put before us persuades me that Timothy Evans should indeed be regarded as having been innocent of the charge of which he was convicted,” adding, “no jury could properly have convicted him of murdering his wife.”

Into the light

On 3 April 1945, nearly six years after it began, the blackout was finally lifted. Prior to this, beginning in September of the previous year, the government had sanctioned the move in some areas towards a ‘dim out’. This allowed the use of more lights than in the previous years but still involved heavy restrictions. However, the relaxing of restrictions was complicated by newspaper articles that mistakenly suggested a full lifting of the blackout was occurring.

The blackout has become part of the nostalgic view of Britain’s home front, part of the mythic ‘Blitz spirit’ referenced so much during the COVID-19 pandemic. But the real blackout was fraught with danger, not only from German bombs, but also from thieves, looters and killers. So the next time you experience a blackout, spare a thought for the population of wartime London taking shelter not only from the threat of German air raids but also from the criminals that lurked in the dark.

From battle to Blitz

HOW THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN LED DIRECTLY TO THE BLITZ

Following the 1940 evacuation of British forces from Dunkirk, Germany began to prepare for an invasion of Britain. In order to cripple its enemy’s defences, the Germans attempted to gain air superiority, and in the summer of 1940 launched attacks on shipping and coastal targets before specifically targeting the RAF. But the German high command’s decision on 7 September to focus its aerial attacks on London gave the RAF the time it desperately needed to recover and eventually repel the Luftwaffe. The bombing raids on London and other major cities killed thousands and caused widespread damage – but they failed to break civilian morale.

Firemen fight to extinguish an inferno caused by a German bombing raid during the Blitz. The bombing of Britain claimed approximately 43,500 lives, equating to almost half of Britain’s civilian war deaths during the conflict

Images: Getty Images, Alamy, Shutterstock

VICTORY IN SIGHT

106 Remembering Bletchley
We talk to Ruth Bourne about her fascinating time working at Britain's codebreaking HQ

112 Britain's fifth column
While the majority of the population worked tirelessly to aid their country in its hour of need, some chose to betray the nation by plotting to help the enemy

120 A friendly invasion
Allies though they may have been, welcoming hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to Britain had its challenges

124 A new struggle: Rebuilding Britain
The war was finally over, but transforming an exhausted nation would require many more years of hardship

Image: Getty Images

REMEMBERING BLETCHLEY THE BOMBE OPERATOR

Ruth Bourne reveals how she operated the famous codebreaking machines developed by Alan Turing and Gordon Welchman during her time at Bletchley Park

WORDS **TOM GARNER**

Although it was shrouded in secrecy for decades, the codebreaking work of Bletchley Park is now recognised as an extraordinary wartime achievement. It was here that prodigiously talented cryptanalysts devised various methods to decipher Axis communications. This produced vital intelligence to aid military operations. Their work shortened the war by two to four years and saved approximately 14 million lives.

To achieve this success, Bletchley Park industrialised codebreaking to unprecedented levels by developing machines such as the Turing-Welchman 'Bombe' and the world's first electronic computer: 'Colossus'. These devices were built in their hundreds and required many people to operate them.

By 1945, almost 10,000 people worked for the Bletchley Park organisation. Seventy-five per cent of these employees were women, and of those 60 per cent were uniformed personnel. This included Ruth Bourne, who was a young recruit from the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS or 'Wrens'). Bourne was only 18 years old when she worked at Bletchley's outstations, but she had a responsible job as a Bombe operator. Now a lauded but modest veteran, Bourne describes her secret role operating one of the most technologically complicated but decisive machines of WWII.

Ruth Bourne pictured in her Wren uniform during WWII. The band on her hat reads, 'HMS' but no ship is named, which was a subtle indication of her intelligence work

"Breaking German codes"

Born in 1926, Bourne joined the Wrens in June 1944 shortly after she turned 18, although her reasons for volunteering were partly aesthetic: "I wanted to join the services, and one of the appeals was the uniform, which was designed by Hardy Amies. The other uniforms were just ordinary men's jackets off the peg, and I didn't even like the colours! The Wrens were much more stylish. My aunt was one of the first women doctors in the army, and she said that the Wrens always had the best time when they were off duty."

After joining the Wrens as a rating, Bourne's training was very different from the job for which she would eventually be chosen. "The basic training was nothing to do with Bletchley. We went up to Scotland and you learned naval terminology, how to scrub floors, get up early and salute, etc. We were then given uniforms and categories before being sent down to Eastcote."

Bourne and six other Wrens were assigned to 'Special Duties X', which led to a fateful interview. "It was with a female petty officer and she said, 'The work you will be doing is highly secret. You'll be

Bombe machines were a key part of the work to decipher Enigma codes during WWII

asked to sign the Official Secrets Act and you won't be able to tell anybody what you did, saw or heard. The hours are antisocial and there will be no promotion. After your training you'll get a slightly higher specialised pay and you'll be working within 50 miles [80 kilometres] of London at all times."

Bourne willingly volunteered for this clandestine role. "My ears pricked up because Birmingham was boring and I always wanted to live in London or have access to it. We all signed the Official Secrets Act before the petty officer said, 'All I can tell you is that we are breaking German codes.' That's all I ever heard."

Now a member of 'Ultra', the Government Code and Cypher School designation for British military signals intelligence, Bourne had joined the high-level decryption team collectively known as 'Bletchley Park'. She believes she was recruited for her linguistic skills: "It was possibly because I was very interested in languages. I had done French, German and Spanish and wanted to be a journalist. I hadn't done them to university level but I had got an entrance to London University and received a lot of distinctions when I did my school certificates."

> *"By the end of the war over 200 Bombes were operated by 1,676 Wrens and 263 male RAF personnel"*

Despite her language skills, Bourne trained to operate an advanced machine to break Axis codes: the Bombe.

A "weird codebreaking factory"

By the end of the war over 200 Bombes were operated by 1,676 Wrens and 263 male RAF personnel. After signing the Official Secrets Act, Bourne was deployed to Bletchley's outstations at Eastcote and Stanmore. At Eastcote she spent a fortnight training on Bombes, which were housed in separate wings that were named after occupied Allied countries. From Bourne's perspective, Eastcote was "like working in a weird codebreaking factory. You went from one machine to another in a large room, which was a sort of 'Bombe bay'. You saw all these machines around you but you just took it for granted."

Two Wrens were assigned to each Bombe at any one time, although Bourne was unaware of Enigma's existence: "I never heard the word 'Enigma'. We understood 'No questions' so I didn't even bother to ask." Nevertheless, finding the key settings of the German cipher machine was central to the Bombe's purpose, as Bourne later discovered: "The Enigma operator chose three out of five scramblers with moveable alphabet rings on the side of each. Under these was a 26-letter plugboard where he could join up ten sets of letters. These settings were changed every 24 hours, so if you permutated this and other variations it gave about 159 million million million possible Enigma settings."

Against such odds of finding the 'key' for the day, the Allies had developed the Bombe to help decrypt Enigma in rapid time. "It could

A machine of genius

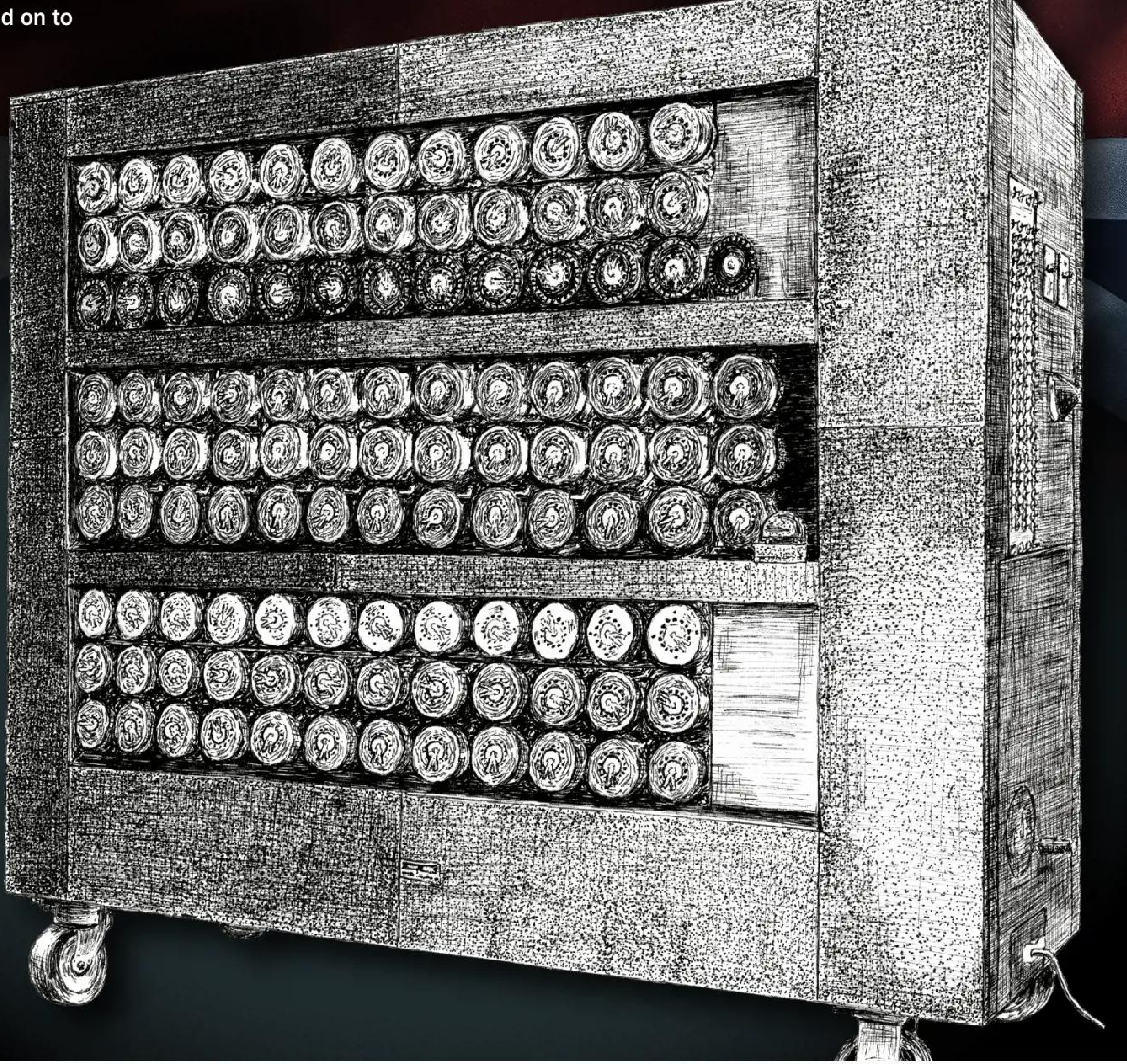
THE BRAINCHILD OF VISIONARY MATHEMATICIANS, THE BOMBE WAS A PRECURSOR TO THE MODERN COMPUTER AND CRUCIAL TO ALLIED VICTORY

Based on a previous Polish deciphering device, the Bombe was initially designed by Alan Turing and later refined by Gordon Welchman. With the ability to assist in the breaking of 3,000–5,000 intercepted messages each day, the brilliance of Turing's design was that the machine compared patterns of the encrypted message ('cribs') and a known portion of plain text to break the key. Additionally, Enigma could not code a letter as itself, so it inadvertently aided the Bombe. Therefore, encryptions could be lined up with a crib until no letter lined up with itself.

The Bombe would mimic Enigma's rotors and plugboard and check 17,500 possibilities before it found a match and stopped. A checking machine would then process the match before the relevant information was passed on to codebreakers to fully decrypt. Using this system, the Bombe ultimately helped to crack 2.5 million messages by the end of the war.

The first Bombe was operational from August 1940, and 211 were eventually built. Their impact was sensational in intelligence-gathering from land, sea and air campaigns. Bletchley Park's staff were able to decode quickly and pass on information with enough time to be acted upon. This had a dramatic effect on Allied success, and Enigma decrypts from the Bombe were crucial to the outcomes of decisive victories such as the Second Battle of El Alamein and D-Day, among many others. These machines industrialised codebreaking and were so successful that the Germans never knew that the 'unbreakable' Enigma had been cracked.

Left: Bourne's invisible nemesis was the German Enigma machine, although she would not know of its existence until decades after WWII



Below: Each Bombe was 2.1 metres [seven feet] wide, two metres [6.5 feet] tall, weighed almost a tone, and had 19 kilometres [12 miles] of wiring and 97,000 different parts

Pictured here from the air in 1945, RAF Eastcote was an outstation for Bletchley Park's codebreaking operations

replicate up to 36 possible Enigma settings in 15 minutes, and there were three 'wheels' that we put on to replicate the scramblers. They were technically 'drums' but we called them wheels. We fixed them onto the machine in a certain way before setting it off, and we also plugged it up at the back in the replica plugboard. When the machine stopped we wrote down the 'answers'."

Preparing the Bombe for a key searching 'run' was a delicate process: "Because the three wheels replicated the scramblers they had to be very accurately set. They had four rows of 26 wire brushes at an angle and 17-19 strands of wire in each brush. One brush could not touch another, so we had to tweeze the used ones out while the machine was running because we didn't want to waste time. You couldn't turn the drum in the wrong direction otherwise you could cause short circuits."

Working behind the Bombe was vital so that instructions sent by Bletchley Park could be accurately carried out: "You went around the back with your checking partner and joined up the plugs that replicated what were in the front of the Enigma. This was because the 'Stecker' plugboard on the machine was changed every day. You did all this by following a vitally important worksheet called a 'menu'. This was constructed by the codebreakers at Bletchley, which represented their projections of what the Enigma key settings might be."

Although Bourne was not involved in the mathematical aspects of codebreaking, her operational diligence was important: "The information was given to us because we didn't and couldn't work it out. However, it was beaten into our brains that we had to be accurate. I was told that 100 per cent accuracy was no good: it had to be 150 per cent."

Once the necessary preparations were complete the machine would be started for a 15-minute run to find the key to the coded messages: "You pressed the starter button, and while it was running you filled in a log sheet. At the end of a run you would take some of the wheels off and put on others according to your instructions. You took off the used wheels while the next run was going and tweezed out any wires touching each other, before putting them back onto a wall rack. You also logged down how the machine behaved during the previous run."

When the machine stopped, Bourne's next job would be to write down information that might indicate that an intercepted message key had been found. "You wrote the information about the wheel orders, which were the equivalent to the three Enigma scramblers and also the letters on another set of wheels. These were related to the letters chosen by the German operator before he dropped his scramblers into his machine."

More detailed information about the message was needed for the cryptanalysts working tirelessly at Bletchley: "You went to the side of the Bombe where there was a 'letter box', where three little rows of the alphabet going from A-Z had a little bale in each window. The machine was telling you which rows of wheels were of interest: the top, middle or bottom. You wrote that down because they were the most important bits of information the mathematicians were looking for. It would tell them if the code setting on the Enigma machine was the right or wrong one."

The key to the coded message was then given additional scrutiny on a 'checking machine': "You would get the information up on your machine from the same 'menu' that was on your Bombe. The three wheels were put on and everything was checked. It was very mathematical, and the checking machine would look for strong possible letter pairs relating to the Enigma plugboard, among other factors. 'A', for example, might be connected to 'Z' for 24 hours, and if we could find one combination others might be worked out that might break the code for that day."

Speed was now absolutely essential in order to get the information decoded: "You'd run like a lunatic from your machine all the way to the bottom of these very large rooms. It was a straight line with long, barrack-like rooms with ten to 12 Bombes in each one. There was a lot of noise, but when you got a message you'd have to go along to the end of one of these off-shoots and hand in your information."

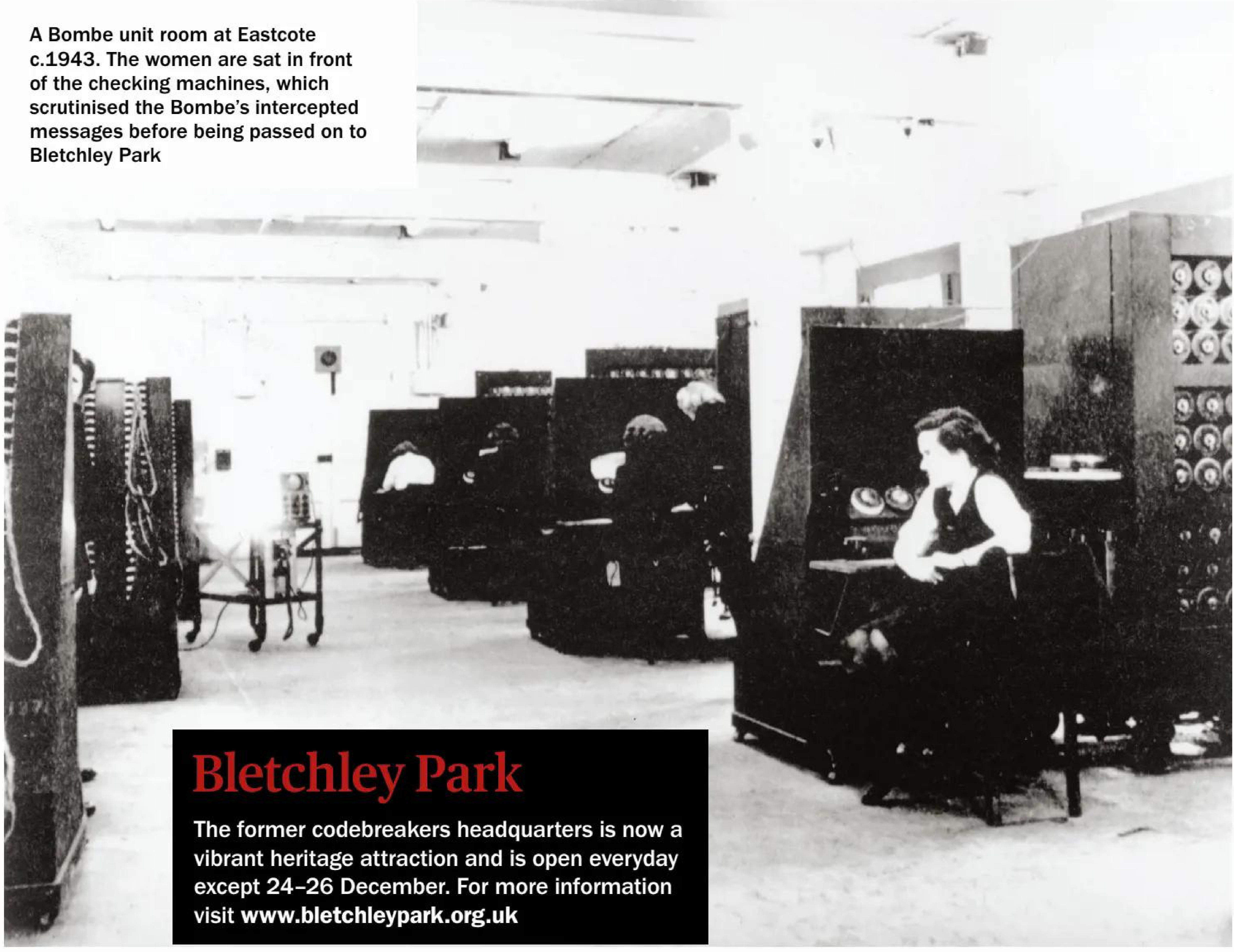
If the checking machine had found a good 'Stop' on the Bombe then Bletchley would be immediately informed: "There was a red telephone, which was a voice scrambler, but we didn't say, 'I think there is a good answer to a code' etc. The Bombe bay we were in was called 'Norway' and each machine was named after a Norwegian town or village. For example, I would say, 'This is Norway. I have a good Stop for you on Stavanger.' Then you would describe the 'Stop' on the Bombe."

Once Bourne's code was handed over to Bletchley it would be analysed on one of the park's resident Enigma machines: "If any kind of clear German came out it would possibly be the answer to all messages in that particular warzone up until midnight, when it would be changed again."

A code confirmation was known as a 'Good Stop', but as Bourne describes, "It might have

> *"Bourne is now a celebrated veteran and was awarded the Légion d'honneur by the French Government on 9 November 2018"*

A Bombe unit room at Eastcote c.1943. The women are sat in front of the checking machines, which scrutinised the Bombe's intercepted messages before being passed on to Bletchley Park



Bletchley Park

The former codebreakers headquarters is now a vibrant heritage attraction and is open everyday except 24–26 December. For more information visit www.bletchleypark.org.uk

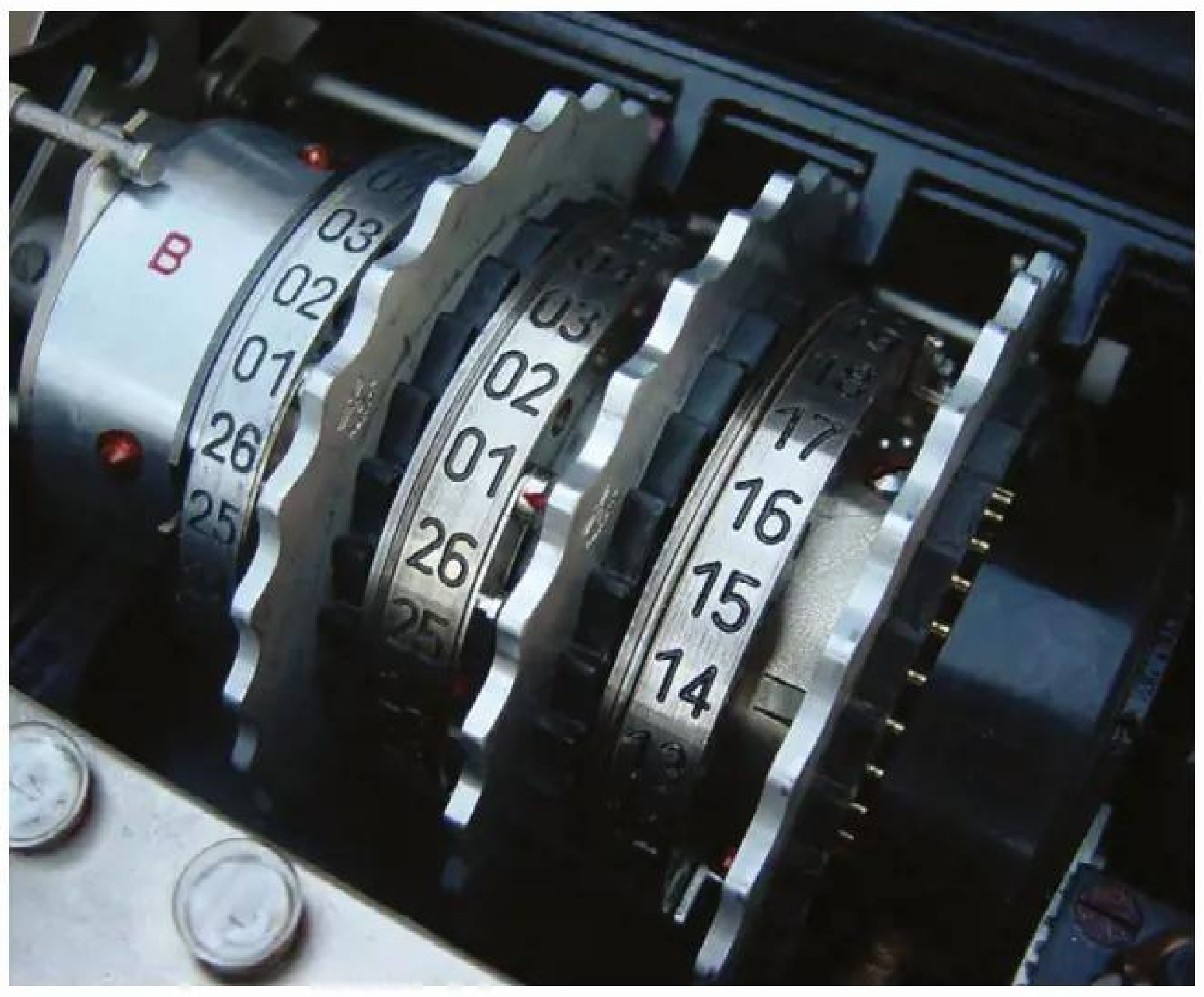
been the correct code but the Enigma machine could also give you two or three other 'Stops' in each 15-minute run."

If Bourne's intercepted message was finally confirmed as a 'Confirmation Stop' she would be briefly informed: "They wouldn't phone you back but the petty officer in charge of the watch would come up and say, 'Job up. Strip.' This meant pulling off the wheels on the Bombe and pulling the plugs out on the back, which were equivalent to the Stecker plugs. You then started all over again with new wheels. It was very organised."

Although Bourne routinely performed this complicated operation every day, she felt gratified when her intercepted messages were confirmed: "You never knew what had been in the message but you felt very pleased that you hadn't made any mistakes. It was also a matter of luck depending on which wheel orders you'd got, but you did feel good if you heard 'Job up'."

Pressure, burnout and secrecy

Because of the immense importance surrounding Bletchley Park's operations, Bourne was never complacent about her work: "It was very serious. If you got a code wrong that was 24 hours wasted, maybe hundreds of people dying and all those clever people would have been wasting their time. It was like being a link in a chain or the beginning of a pathway, and that's why we were going for 150 per cent accuracy."


The three rotor stacks inside the Enigma machine were ingeniously replicated on the Bombe

The pressure of operating the Bombe was also compounded by gruelling shifts: "During the first week in a month you would work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., the second week 4 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 8 a.m. during the third week, and by the fourth week there was an extra shift, which was quite difficult. You worked in Block B, but in Block A, where you ate and slept, you were considered an ordinary Wren again. You still had to do other duties like fire watching and washing up, whether you were tired or not."

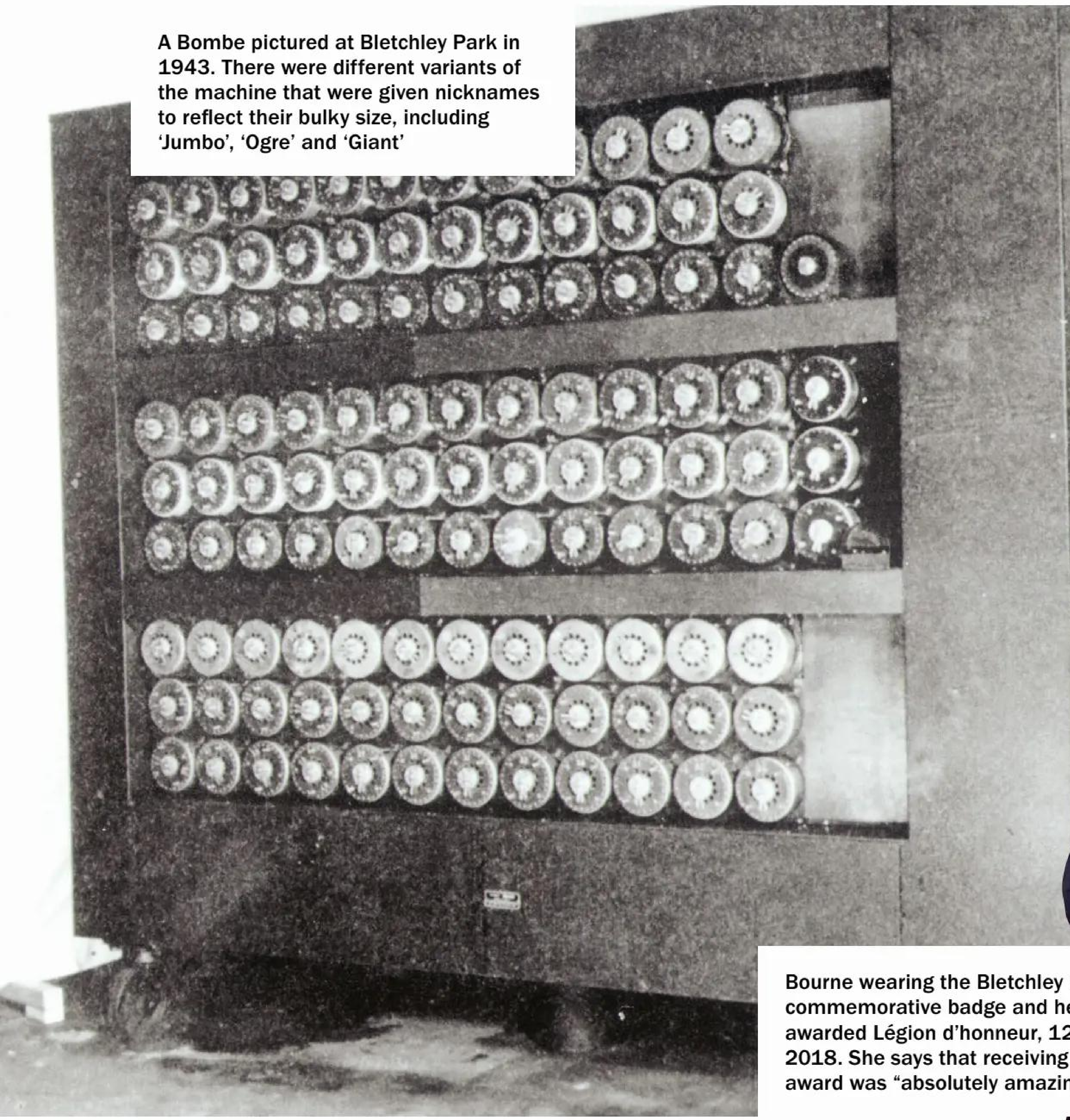
Bourne recalls that the relentless working hours were exhausting: "It was like having constant jet lag. Sleeping was difficult and you'd have indigestion from having your 'lunch' at midnight and having your breakfast at 8 a.m. when you came off, before going to bed. Seventy-two of us slept on double bunks in a 'cabin' at Eastcote that was more like a barracks with concrete barrier walls. The curtains were cheap and thin, so if you went to bed at 10 a.m. it was very hard to sleep with the light coming through."

Eventually, the fatigue took its toll. "A lot of us were knackered and suffered from burnout, including myself. I initially didn't know what it was and only knew I didn't feel well. When I went to sickbay and the doctors asked what the matter was I just said, 'I don't know' and started crying. They put me to bed for four days and my mother came down from Birmingham and brought me what seemed like half a chicken! They gave me a week's leave, which was very unusual, but I bounced back."

Despite her mother's visit, Bourne could not tell her about her work: "She was very miffed and would say, 'You can tell me, I'm your mother,' but I thought, 'Yes, but it would be around Birmingham in five minutes flat.' She hadn't signed the Official Secrets Act but I had, and 'nice girls' like me did what they were told."

Maintaining Bletchley's secrecy was considered to be vital: "We were told, 'You must never tell anybody. That's forever and if by any chance you let the word out you will be immediately sent to prison.' It was not cool to go to prison, so we took it very seriously."

Bourne's anonymity took practical forms, although she once encountered a fellow secret operative from headquarters. "We had no badges


A Bombe pictured at Bletchley Park in 1943. There were different variants of the machine that were given nicknames to reflect their bulky size, including 'Jumbo', 'Ogre' and 'Giant'

Bourne wearing the Bletchley Park commemorative badge and her newly awarded Légion d'honneur, 12 December 2018. She says that receiving the French award was "absolutely amazing"

A 'W/T Red Form' dated from 26 December 1943 that demonstrates the decryption results of the Bombe. This decoded message was intercepted from the German battleship 'Scharnhorst' (pictured), which stated, "Am steering for Tannafjord. Position IS SQ AC 4992. Speed 20 Knots. Scharnhorst." Royal Navy vessels proceeded to locate and sink the ship the same day

on our uniforms to say what we were doing, although other categories of Wrens did. I once met a girl and we asked each other what we were doing and she said, 'I'm at Bletchley.' I replied, 'That's nice. Our quarters are horrible, what are yours like?' but she simply repeated, 'I'm at Bletchley'. I knew then that she wasn't going to say another word, that's how it was."

Such was the successful silence surrounding Bletchley that Winston Churchill sent a thankful telegram to Eastcote: "He was very fond of bird analogies and described the Bletchley employees as 'the geese that lay the golden eggs but never cackled'. I remember reading on the notice board a message he sent to the Wrens that said, 'Glad to hear the hens are laying so well without clucking.'"

Despite the pressure and silence surrounding Bletchley Park's operations, Bourne did find time to enjoy herself: "I was quite happy and we had a lot of fun. In between your shifts there were lots of attractions in London where you could stay out with late passes. It also very much helped being in uniform; we could get cheap theatre tickets and go out the back to meet stars such as Laurence Olivier and Emlyn Williams. They would sign our programmes and have a few words with us, which was nice."

Following VE Day, Bourne was due to be posted overseas to work on Japanese weather codes, but Japan's surrender ended that possibility. "We were selected to go to Malta or Gibraltar, where the new GCHQ was based, but we never got there. I clearly remember the atomic bomb was dropped while we were queuing to have our vaccinations to go abroad at Stanmore."

Instead, Bourne was ordered to destroy the Bombe machines: "Churchill had apparently ordered that they be dismantled, and we tore them apart. We had a soldering iron and there were 12 miles [19 kilometres] of wire in each Bombe. The wires had little connections, and these had to be unsoldered. The connections went into one box, the wire went into another box, and a lot was sold off as army surplus."

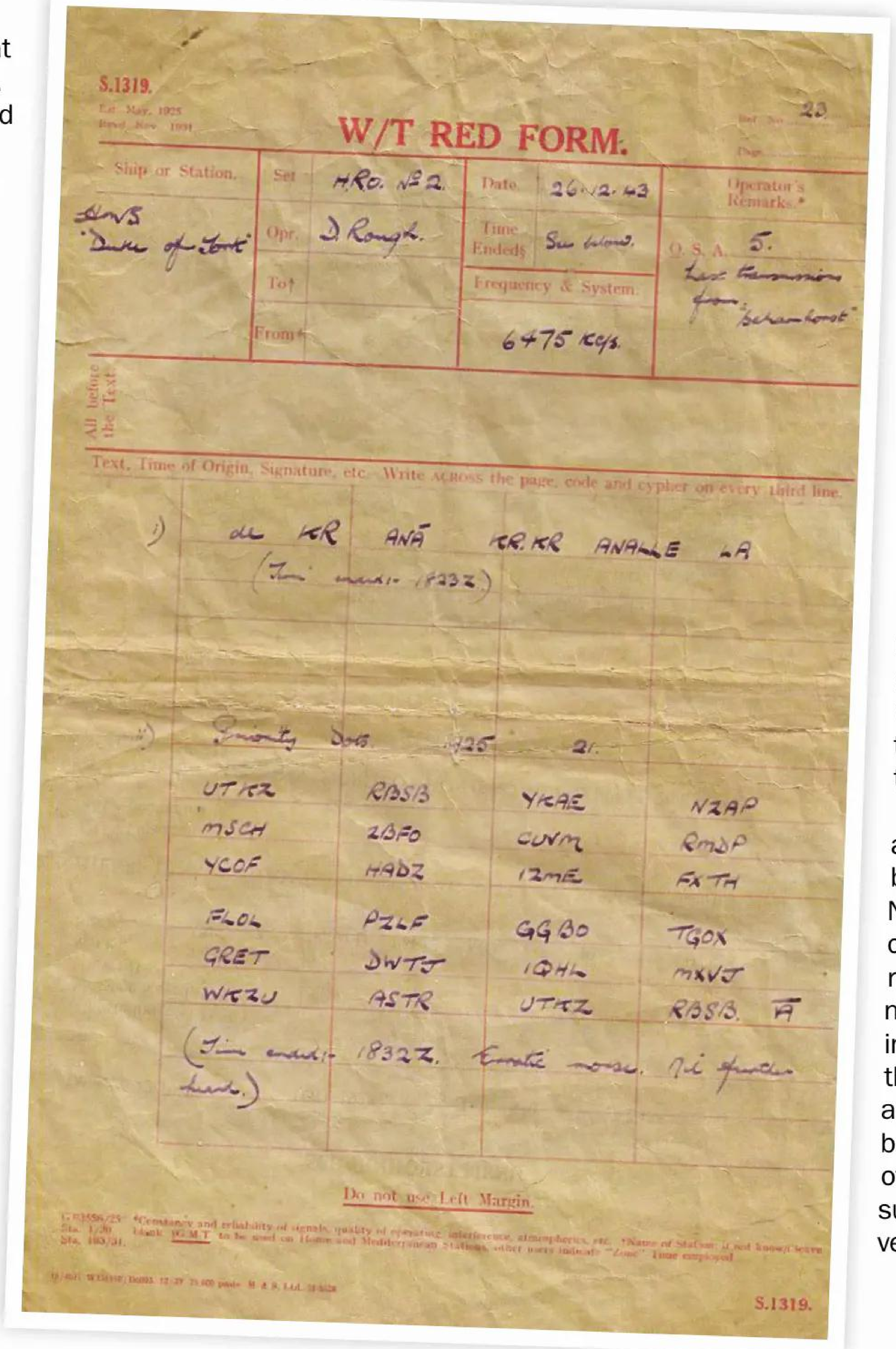
Silence and recognition

Bourne served in the Wrens until she was demobbed in November 1946. She didn't speak of her wartime work for decades, until the secrets of Bletchley began to be publicised: "It wasn't very difficult to forget about it because it had just been a job and I was getting married etc. What I had done went by the board and my parents died not knowing what I did, they hadn't a clue. We [the surviving veterans] would still never have said anything, but books started to come out, like F. W. Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret* in 1974. Even that first book was very limited because all the information was still held in the Public Record Office."

Nevertheless, Bourne eventually became determined to highlight the importance of the wartime codebreakers. In 1994, she became a volunteer guide at Bletchley Park, working there for over 20 years. During that time she became more aware of the value of her own work: "I had to be very knowledgeable and started reading all the books and making notes. I learned about how Enigma really worked and its connection to the Bombe, and then the whole picture began to add up."

Through her guiding, Bourne began to be publicly recognised for her contribution, which she initially found a little disconcerting: "It was only when I started volunteering that more information kept emerging. People started to want to shake my hand for what I had done during the war, and that was very embarrassing but they thought it was important."

Bourne is now a celebrated veteran and was awarded the Légion d'honneur by the French Government on 9 November 2018. She is also more comfortable with the attention she receives: "Now I feel very proud, but not because of what I particularly did in a way. The only thing I'm proud of is that I did it accurately and never told anybody. I can't say I was a codebreaker because I wasn't. However, I was part of it and trusted to be part of it. I'm very surprised at the recognition, but I feel very pleased and happy."



S.1319.

W/T RED FORM.

23

Ship or Station. HMS "Duke of York"

Set HRO. No 2

Opr. D Rough.

To†

From†

Date 26/12/43

Time Ended§ See below.

Frequency & System. 6475 kc/s.

Operator's Remarks.* Q.S.A. 5. Last transmission from "Scharnhorst"

All before the Text.

Text, Time of Origin, Signature, etc. Write ACROSS the page, code and cypher on every third line.

i) de KR ANĀ KR KR ANALLE LA
(Time ended:- 1823Z)

ii) Priority Dots. 1825 21.

UTKZ	RBSB	YKAE	NZAP
MSCH	2BFO	CUVM	RMDP
YCOF	HADZ	12ME	FXTH
FLOL	PZLF	GGBO	TGOX
GRET	DWTJ	1QHL	MXVJ
WKZU	ASTR	UTKZ	RBSB. $\overline{A}$

(Time ended:- 1832Z. Erratic morse. No further heard.)

Do not use Left Margin.

*Constancy and reliability of signals, quality of operating, interference, atmospherics, etc. †Name of Station if not known leave blank. G.M.T. to be used on Home and Mediterranean Stations, other ones indicate "Zone" Time employed

S.1319.

Images: Getty Images, Shutterstock, Ruth Bourne. Illustration: Dawn Monks, dawnmonksillustrations.co.uk

Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, delivers a speech at the Earls Court Exhibition Centre in London, 1939

BRITAIN'S FIFTH COLUMN

Musicians, aristocrats, war heroes and even members of Parliament conspired to turn Britain over to the Nazis. But for the bravery of British intelligence agents, they may have succeeded

WORDS **BEN BIGGS**

The term 'fifth column', referring to a group of enemy sympathisers who work to undermine a nation from within, was originally coined in the late 1930s during the Spanish Civil War. Nationalist general Francisco Franco controlled four columns of troops that besieged Madrid, while it was said General Emilio Mola praised a "quinta columna" of agents working from inside Madrid to bring about the surrender of the Spanish republicans. The term was still fresh in the minds of the Allies a few years later when WWII began. This metaphor seemed especially appropriate for the dozens of Nazi sympathisers and agents inside British borders, who often fronted as anti-war British nationalists. When the Germans invaded France, Winston Churchill had to push the Treachery Act through Parliament. Catching and convicting over 70 traitors who threatened to unlock Britain's doors for the Nazis would have been much harder without this revised legislation. Let's meet some of the treacherous figures who worked to sell out their country to Hitler.

Oswald Mosley 1896-1980

Britain's most infamous fascist, who assembled his own army of blackshirts and was on friendly terms with both Hitler and Mussolini, was a quintessential Englishman. At least to begin with. Oswald Ernald Mosley was born into privilege, succeeding his father as sixth baronet in an aristocratic family that could trace its lineage back nearly 1,000 years to the reign of King John. He attended the prestigious Winchester College public school and fought in WWI, first in the cavalry then later as a pilot, before making his first foray into politics as Conservative MP for Harrow at the tender age of 22.

As a politician, Mosley flitted from one side of the House of Commons to the next, eventually resigning from the Labour Party in 1930 to set up the predecessor of the British Union of Fascists (BUF). When the 'New Party' failed, he went to Italy to meet Italian Prime Minister and dictator Benito Mussolini. This fascist regime made a big impression on Mosley, who returned to Britain to found the BUF, a party very much in the image of Mussolini and his army of goose-stepping thugs. The BUF adopted the Partito Nazionale Fascista's fasces as the party's symbol, its members would give the same palm-down, extended right-arm salute made famous by Hitler, and they wore black uniforms. Emboldened by the rise of Naziism across Europe in the 1930s, Mosley led the BUF on a campaign of violence and intimidation against the Jewish population in Britain, and at one point exchanged warm letters with Hitler, who kept a close eye on the BUF.

Mosley is pictured addressing a fascist meeting in 1934

The 50,000 members of the BUF and its self-styled British 'Il Duce' never achieved much political success, although they made a loud noise that made them incredibly unpopular with the public. The police Special Branch and MI5 had infiltrated the BUF as early as 1934 over concerns that public opinion may be swayed in favour of Mosley. So following the May 1940 invasion of France, the entire BUF leadership was arrested and detained for being enemy sympathisers, along with Mosley's second wife, Diana, who was described in recently declassified MI5 documents as being "far cleverer and more dangerous than her husband and will stick at nothing to achieve her ambitions". Within two months, the BUF was formally shut down.

Barry Domvile 1878-1971

At around the same time that the BUF blackshirts were marching on London's east end, another prominent British Nazi sympathiser was on the rise, arguably even more dangerous to a free and democratic Britain than Oswald Mosley. Barry Domvile was a Royal Navy man who captained individual ships in WWI and as admiral commanded an entire fleet in the interwar period. Before he retired in 1936 he visited Germany, where he went on a shooting expedition with Hitler's notorious SS leader, Heinrich Himmler, and visited a concentration camp. In 1936 and 1937, he attended German Nazi Party rallies and also visited Mussolini's Italy. It was clear that Europe's two major fascist regimes, whose racist and antisemitic ideals aligned with his own, had made a big impression on Domvile. In 1937, he founded The Link, an organisation that ostensibly promoted understanding and friendship between Germans and Britons in the interest of avoiding war while embracing conspiracy theories and extreme Nazi ideology.

In 1939, questions were raised in Parliament about claims that The Link was spreading Nazi propaganda in return for Nazi funding. These claims were apparently vindicated when Domvile posed for photographs at a council member's house with a photo of Hitler and a statue of a storm trooper behind him. Domvile disbanded The Link when war broke out that September, but he was already on MI5's radar. He was arrested in July 1940 for being "concerned in acts prejudicial to public safety or the Defence of the Realm" and jailed without habeas corpus under the same wartime defence regulation that saw the BUF leadership put away.

Domvile was a Nazi sympathiser who was implicated in a fascist plot against the British Government

Archibald Maule Ramsay 1894-1955

Up until the mid-1930s, Archibald Ramsay had trodden a well-worn path for an upper-class Briton of his time: the Scottish aristocrat was sent to Eton College by his wealthy parents, and he joined the army after a stint in Sandhurst Royal Military College, serving two years as a captain in France during WWI before he was injured and sent home.

It was in the 1920s, after he retired from the army, that he became more involved in politics and his more extreme views against Jews began to surface. Antisemitism was an insalubrious undercurrent in the British upper-classes, so it didn't stop Ramsay from being elected as the MP for Peebles and Southern Midlothian. He made attacks on the Spanish Republic and Soviet Russia in the House of Commons, while outside of Parliament he brazenly courted antisemitic conspiracy theories and cultivated festering sympathies to the Nazi regime in Germany. It was when Ramsay set up the Right Club, a secret society that sought to "oppose and expose the activities of Organised Jewry," that his downfall was set in stone.

Tyler Kent was a clerk in the U.S. embassy and a Right Club member who was convinced President Roosevelt was working for a Jewish cabal. After he was seen handing over a package to a known German intelligence agent, Kent's home was raided and a red Right Club members book discovered. His connection to Ramsay was of great concern, particularly to the British: Ramsay could have talked in the Commons about any documents Kent gave to him with impunity due to his parliamentary privilege, making public highly sensitive information. This was not a risk the authorities were willing to take, so in May 1940, Ramsay was arrested and jailed. He resumed his Westminster seat upon his release in 1944, but he chose not to defend it in the general election the following year.

Archibald Maule Ramsay was known for his antisemtic views

"Beckett was arrested in May 1940 along with William Joyce and others suspected of espionage under the newly amended Treachery Act"

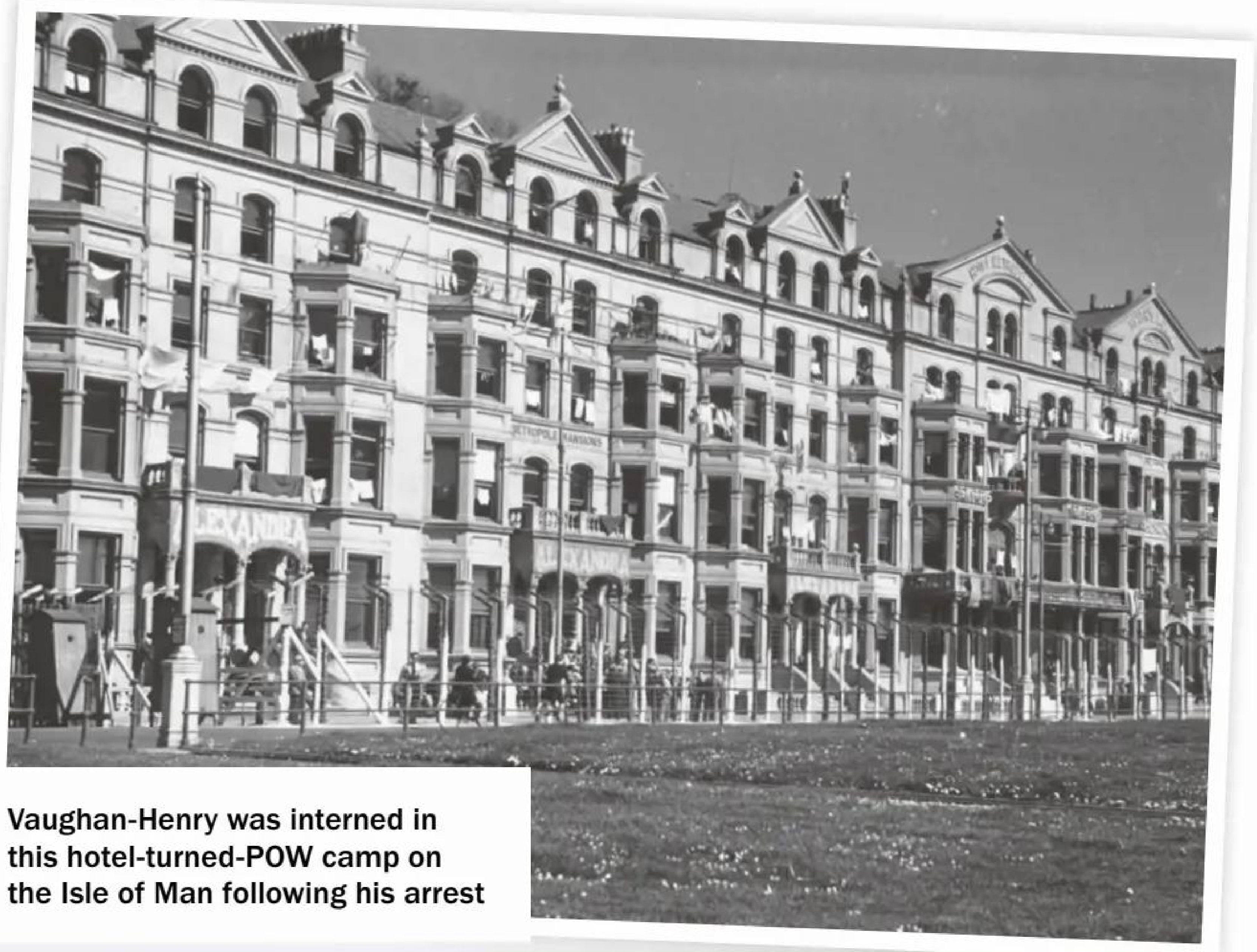
John Beckett 1894-1964

The least likely of the eight Nazi sympathisers in this feature was John Beckett, a working class son to a Jewish mother who was, at one point, tipped for political stardom as a Labour MP and close ally to future prime minister Clement Attlee. Beckett didn't appear short on empathy: he was so deeply affected by soldiers returning from the horrors of the trenches that he set up a charity to help ex-servicemen. He was also a champion for the working classes at a time when there was a world of difference between the haves and the have-nots in Britain.

So what happened? Disillusioned by Westminster's bias towards societal elites and frustrated by his inability to affect meaningful change, he quit politics in 1931 and visited Italy where, like Oswald Mosley, Mussolini's corporation-focused fascist state made a big impression. Back home, Beckett was inevitably caught up in Britain's far-right movement. He joined Mosley's British Union of Fascists before forming his own National Socialist League with the Nazi propagandist and broadcaster William "Lord Haw-Haw" Joyce, occasionally spouting fiery antisemitic speeches, all the while hiding his Jewish ancestry. Beckett was arrested in May 1940 along with William Joyce and others suspected of espionage under the newly amended Treachery Act.

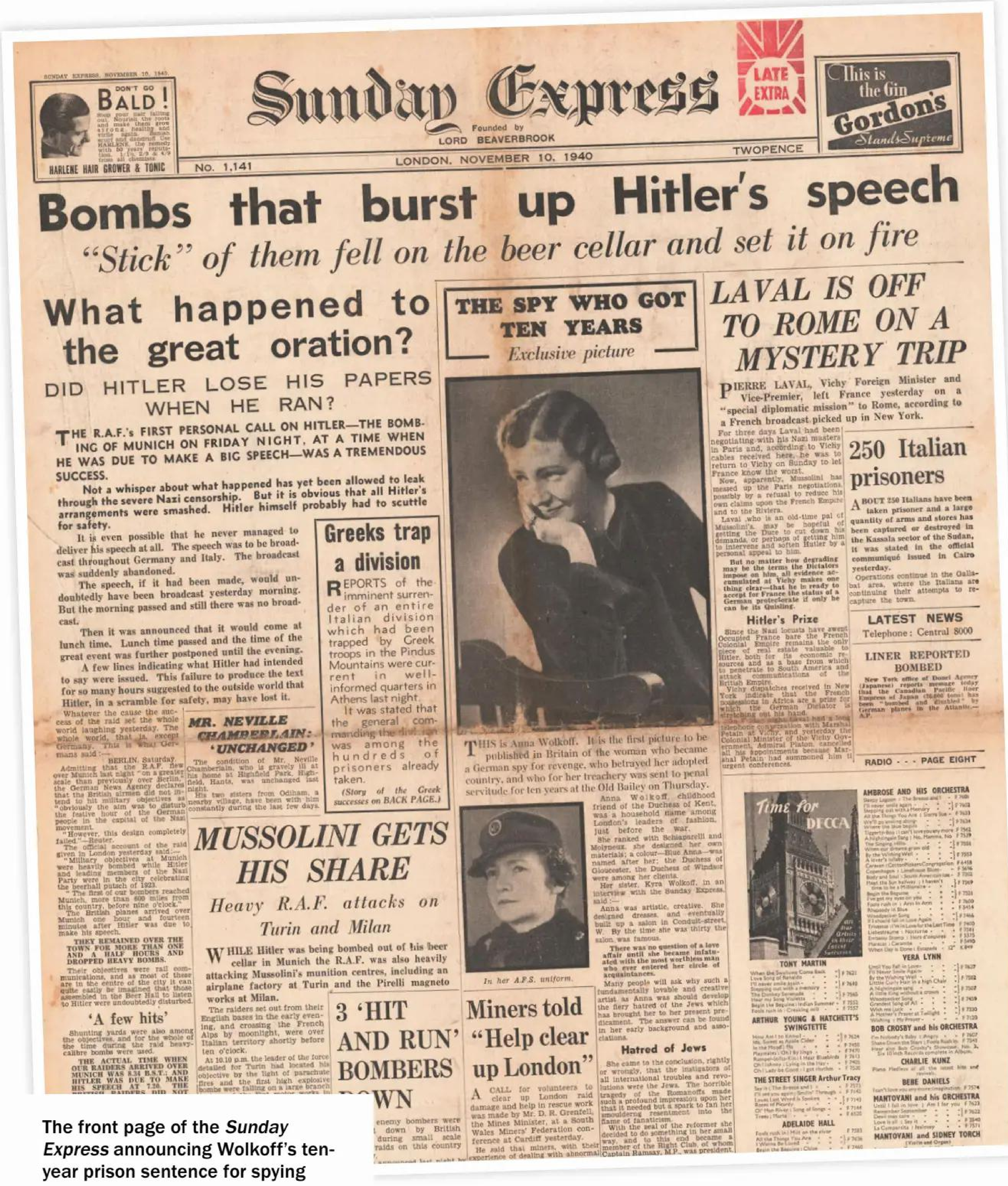
Dr Leigh Vaughan-Henry 1889-1958

One of the most dangerous of the fifth column plots came not from a foreign national or bigoted blue-blood, but from a Liverpool-born composer who vaunted his Welsh heritage. Vaughan-Henry was born into a musical family as the son of a North Walian composer. He trained in Europe, where he was interned in Germany during WWI, before he returned to England. He was a musician, a poet, a storyteller, a member of the Welsh bardic society Gorsedd Cymru and, behind this facade of respectability, a virulent antisemite and fascist sympathiser who colluded with a few other poisonous individuals to replace the British Government should the Nazis invade. His correspondence with German intelligence saw him placed on MI5's blacklist years before his arrest in June 1940, but his plot was nevertheless terrifying in its scale and ambition. He had established a network of 18 cells made of up 25 members who were ready to pull off a coup d'état that sought to make General Edmund Ironside a dictator – at which point "Germany could do as she liked with Britain," a co-conspirator later told MI5. He had also secured a series of safe houses, a printing press with which to print false identity papers, and plotted to murder any resistant politicians. When MI5 raided his home, they found a scrap of paper that suggested he was in negotiations for £250,000 worth of Lee Enfield rifles.



Vaughan-Henry was interned in this hotel-turned-POW camp on the Isle of Man following his arrest

Anna Wolkoff 1902-1973



SUNDAY EXPRESS, NOVEMBER 10, 1940.

DON'T GO BALD!
HARLENE HAIR GROWER & TONIC

Sunday Express
Founded by LORD BEAVERBROOK
No. 1,141 LONDON, NOVEMBER 10, 1940 TWOPENCE
LATE EXTRA

This is the Gin
Gordon's
Stands Supreme

Bombs that burst up Hitler's speech

"Stick" of them fell on the beer cellar and set it on fire

What happened to the great oration?

DID HITLER LOSE HIS PAPERS WHEN HE RAN?

THE R.A.F.'s FIRST PERSONAL CALL ON HITLER—THE BOMBING OF MUNICH ON FRIDAY NIGHT, AT A TIME WHEN HE WAS DUE TO MAKE A BIG SPEECH—WAS A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS.

Not a whisper about what happened has yet been allowed to leak through the severe Nazi censorship. But it is obvious that all Hitler's arrangements were smashed. Hitler himself probably had to scuttle for safety.

It is even possible that he never managed to deliver his speech at all. The speech was to be broadcast throughout Germany and Italy. The broadcast was suddenly abandoned.

The speech, if it had been made, would undoubtedly have been broadcast yesterday morning. But the morning passed and still there was no broadcast.

Then it was announced that it would come at lunch time. Lunch time passed and the time of the great event was further postponed until the evening.

A few lines indicating what Hitler had intended to say were issued. This failure to produce the text for so many hours suggested to the outside world that Hitler, in a scramble for safety, may have lost it.

Whatever the cause the success of the raid set the whole world laughing yesterday. The whole world, that is, except Germany. This is what Germans said:—

BERLIN, Saturday.

Admitting that the R.A.F. flew over Munich last night "on a greater scale than previously over Berlin," the German News Agency declares that the British airmen did not intend to hit military objectives as "obviously the aim was to disturb the festive hour of the German people in the capital of the Nazi movement.

"However, this design completely failed."—Reuter.

The official account of the raid given in London yesterday said:—

"Military objectives at Munich were heavily bombed while Hitler and leading members of the Nazi Party were in the city celebrating the beerhall putsch of 1923.

"The first of our bombers reached Munich, more than 600 miles from this country, before nine o'clock."

The British planes arrived over Munich one hour and fourteen minutes after Hitler was due to make his speech.

THEY REMAINED OVER THE TOWN FOR MORE THAN ONE AND A HALF HOURS AND DROPPED HEAVY BOMBS.

Their objectives were rail communications, and as most of these are in the centre of the city it can quite easily be imagined that those assembled in the Beer Hall to listen to Hitler were undoubtedly disturbed.

'A few hits'

Shunting yards were also among the objectives, and for the whole of the time during the raid heavy-calibre bombs were used.

THE ACTUAL TIME WHEN OUR RAIDERS ARRIVED OVER MUNICH WAS 8.34 B.S.T.; AND HITLER WAS DUE TO MAKE HIS SPEECH AT 7.20. THE

MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN: 'UNCHANGED'

The condition of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who is gravely ill at his home at Highfield Park, Highfield, Hants, was unchanged last night.

His two sisters from Odiham, a nearby village, have been with him constantly during the last few days.

Greeks trap a division

REPORTS of the imminent surrender of an entire Italian division which had been trapped by Greek troops in the Pindus Mountains were current in well-informed quarters in Athens last night.

It was stated that the general commanding the division was among the hundreds of prisoners already taken.

(Story of the Greek successes on BACK PAGE.)

MUSSOLINI GETS HIS SHARE

Heavy R.A.F. attacks on Turin and Milan

WHILE Hitler was being bombed out of his beer cellar in Munich the R.A.F. was also heavily attacking Mussolini's munition centres, including an airplane factory at Turin and the Pirelli magneto works at Milan.

The raiders set out from their English bases in the early evening, and crossing the French Alps by moonlight, were over Italian territory shortly before ten o'clock.

At 10.10 p.m. the leader of the force detailed for Turin had located his objective by the light of parachute flares and the first high explosive bombs were falling on a large branch

3 'HIT AND RUN' BOMBERS DOWN

enemy bombers were down by British during small scale raids on this country

THE SPY WHO GOT TEN YEARS

Exclusive picture

THIS is Anna Wolkoff. It is the first picture to be published in Britain of the woman who became a German spy for revenge, who betrayed her adopted country, and who for her treachery was sent to penal servitude for ten years at the Old Bailey on Thursday.

In her A.F.S. uniform.

Anna Wolkoff, childhood friend of the Duchess of Kent, was a household name among London's leaders of fashion just before the war.

She ranked with Schiaparelli and Molyneux. she designed her own materials; a colour—Blue Anna—was named after her; the Duchess of Gloucester, the Duchess of Windsor were among her clients.

Her sister, Kyra Wolkoff, in an interview with the Sunday Express, said:—

Anna was artistic, creative. She designed dresses, and eventually built up a salon in Conduit-street, W. By the time she was thirty the salon was famous.

There was no question of a love affair until she became infatuated with the most worthless man who ever entered her circle of acquaintances.

Many people will ask why such a fundamentally lovable and creative artist as Anna was should develop the fiery hatred of the Jews which has brought her to her present predicament. The answer can be found in her early background and associations.

Hatred of Jews

She came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that the instigators of all international troubles and revolutions were the Jews. The horrible tragedy of the Romanoffs made such a profound impression upon her that it needed but a spark to fan her smouldering resentment into the flame of fanaticism.

With the zeal of the reformer she decided to do something in her small way, and to this end became a member of the Right Club, of whom Captain Ramsay, M.P., was president.

Miners told "Help clear up London"

A CALL for volunteers to clear up London raid damage and help in rescue work was made by Mr. D. R. Grenfell, the Mines Minister, at a South Wales Miners' Federation conference at Cardiff yesterday.

He said that miners, with their experience of dealing with abnormal

LAVAL IS OFF TO ROME ON A MYSTERY TRIP

PIERRE LAVAL, Vichy Foreign Minister and Vice-Premier, left France yesterday on a "special diplomatic mission" to Rome, according to a French broadcast picked up in New York.

For three days Laval had been negotiating with his Nazi masters in Paris and, according to Vichy cables received here, he was to return to Vichy on Sunday to let France know the worst.

Now, apparently, Mussolini has messed up the Paris negotiations, possibly by a refusal to reduce his own claims upon the French Empire and to the Riviera.

Laval, who is an old-time pal of Mussolini's, may be hopeful of getting the Duce to cut down his demands, or perhaps of getting him to intervene and soften Hitler by a personal appeal to him.

But no matter how degrading may be the terms the Dictators impose on him, all evidence accumulated at Vichy makes one thing clear—that he is ready to accept for France the status of a German protectorate if only he can be its Quisling.

Hitler's Prize

Since the Nazi locusts have swept Occupied France bare the French Colonial Empire remains the only piece of real estate valuable to Hitler, both for its economic resources and as a base from which to penetrate to South America and attack communications of the British Empire.

Vichy dispatches received in New York indicate that the French possessions in Africa are a prize for which the German Dictator is stretching out his hand.

[illegible] Laval had a long telephone conversation with Marshal Petain at Vichy, and yesterday the Colonial Minister of the Vichy Government, Admiral Platon, cancelled all his appointments because Marshal Petain had summoned him to urgent conferences.

250 Italian prisoners

ABOUT 250 Italians have been taken prisoner and a large quantity of arms and stores has been captured or destroyed in the Kassala sector of the Sudan, it was stated in the official communiqué issued in Cairo yesterday.

Operations continue in the Gallabat area, where the Italians are continuing their attempts to recapture the town.

LATEST NEWS
Telephone: Central 8000

LINER REPORTED BOMBED

New York office of Domei Agency (Japanese) reports message today that the Canadian Pacific liner Empress of Japan (26,000 tons) has been "bombed and disabled" by German planes in the Atlantic.—A.P.

RADIO - - - PAGE EIGHT

Time for DECCA
All Your Artists in their Latest Successes
AMBROSE AND HIS ORCHESTRA
TONY MARTIN
ARTHUR YOUNG & HATCHETT'S SWINGTETTE
THE STREET SINGER Arthur Tracy
ADELAIDE HALL
VERA LYNN
BOB CROSBY and his ORCHESTRA
CHARLIE KUNZ
BEBE DANIELS
MANTOVANI and his ORCHESTRA
MANTOVANI and SIDNEY TORCH
(Violin and Organ)

The front page of the *Sunday Express* announcing Wolkoff's ten-year prison sentence for spying

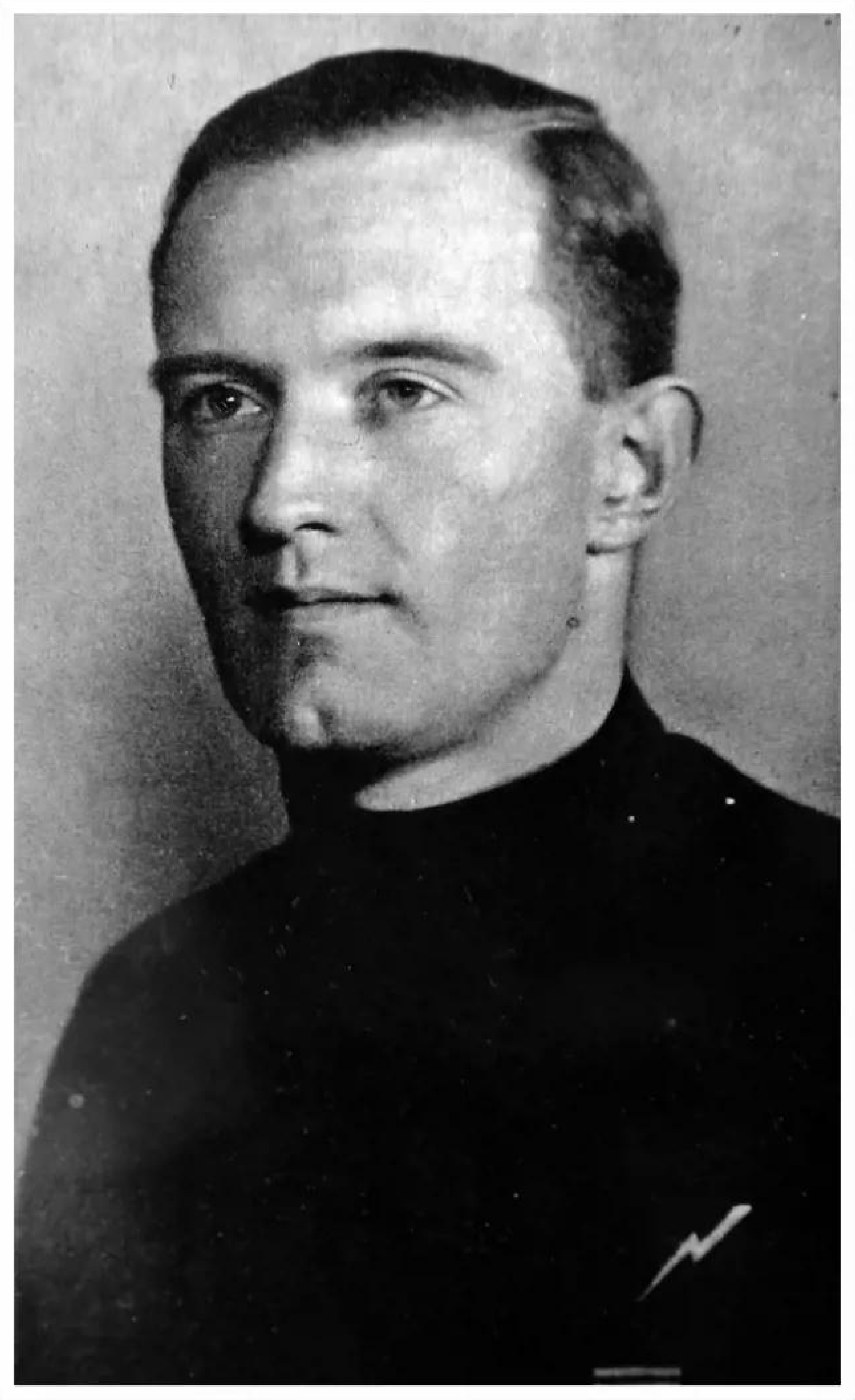
Russia-born Wolkoff was the daughter of Tsar Nicholas II's aide-de-camp in London, who after the 1917 Russian Revolution chose to stay in England. Both father and daughter were ardent far-right ideologists, and in the 1930s Anna Wolkoff made several trips to Germany to meet with senior Nazis like Rudolf Hess. As a member of Archibald Ramsay's Right Club, Wolkoff knew both Ramsay and U.S. embassy cypher clerk Tyler Kent well. In 1940, Kent invited both Wolkoff and Ramsay to his flat to view secret correspondence between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill that discussed, among other things, the U.S. support of France if it was invaded. She made copies of these documents and passed them on to the Italian embassy, where they eventually made their way into Nazi hands. Wolkoff also asked fellow Right Club member Joan Miller to pass a message to Nazi radio broadcaster William Joyce via the Italian embassy. Miller was one of several MI5 agents who had infiltrated the club: Wolkoff's name already had a black mark against it as far as the British authorities were concerned, but now her copy book was well and truly blotted. She was arrested at the same time that Kent's flat was raided and sentenced to ten years imprisonment in November 1940.

Lord Haw-Haw

1906-1946

New York-born William Joyce was another unlikely Nazi sympathiser, whose parents moved back to their native Ireland when he was just a boy. Here, as a teenager, Joyce acted as a courier for British military intelligence during the Irish War for Independence. As a young man he was drawn into fascism and almost inevitably joined Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in 1932, where he acquired a reputation as a rousing orator. He was made director of propaganda for the BUF but began to alienate himself from the rest of the party with his overtly antisemitic rhetoric. He was fired from the BUF in 1937 and left for Germany just before the outbreak of war, where he was made a German citizen. Here he got a job making English announcements for German radio and became one of several English-speakers broadcasting out of Zeesen known as a single radio personality, 'Lord Haw-Haw', a nickname coined by a radio critic for the *Daily Express* in Britain, who described him as "speaking English of the haw-haw, damit-get-out-of-my-way variety".

Lord Haw-Haw's broadcasts blamed Jews for the war, emphasised the futility of British resistance against Nazi Germany and were intended to undermine British morale. Nevertheless, this did not stop up to 18 million listeners tuning in, most of them seeking news of the war from an Axis perspective. In May 1945, just a few weeks after victory in Europe was announced, intelligence officers captured Joyce and his wife living on the Danish border. He was tried in London, charged with three counts of high treason and convicted of one – a capital offence for which he was hanged on 3 January 1946.



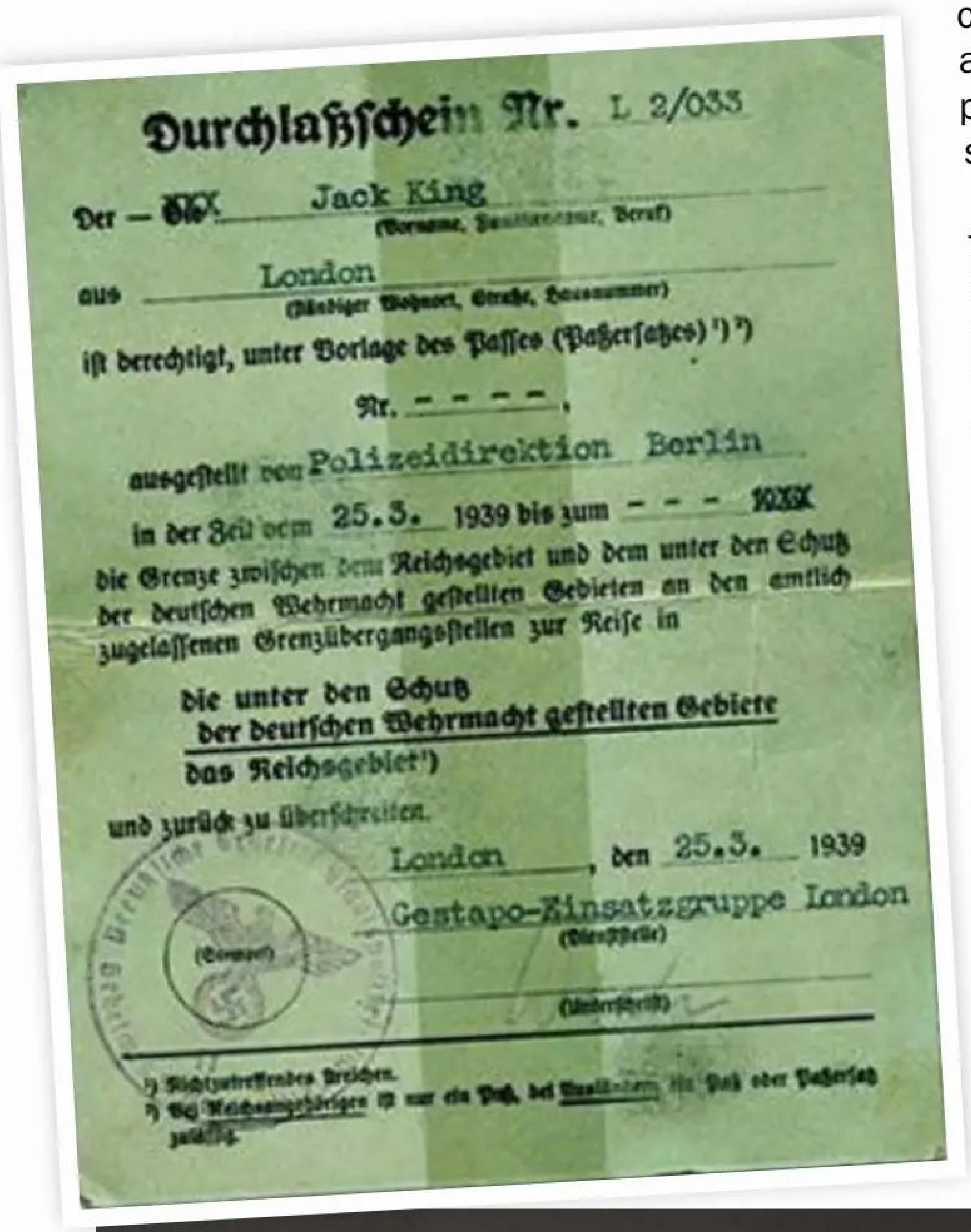
Duncan Scott-Ford 1921-1942

The story of the sailor who sold his country out for the equivalent of £18 and became the youngest person – barely out of his teens – to be hanged under the Treachery Act is almost a tragic one. Duncan Scott-Ford's father was a Royal Navy man himself before he attempted to commit suicide, failed, then died after he succumbed to pneumonia when recovering from the morphine overdose he had taken. Scott-Ford was just 11 years old at the time. Five years later he joined the Navy, only to be jailed in 1941 for falsifying his Post Office savings account book. He was released six months later, joined the Merchant Navy and was put on ship to Portugal, which was when he got into real trouble. In Lisbon he met a man who called himself 'Rithman' in a bar who offered him 1,000 escudos for details on the movement of British ships. He went on to have several more meetings with Rithman and his associates, even though Scott-Ford couldn't give them much of the information they asked for. Having returned home to Manchester, Scott-Ford was taken into custody after he admitted to speaking to the man the authorities already suspected of being a German agent. When notes on the convoy were found in his quarters, Scott-Ford was interrogated, charged and found guilty.

Infiltrating the enemy

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE AGENTS KEPT THEIR FRIENDS CLOSE AND THEIR ENEMIES EVEN CLOSER

In the early years of WWI, the threat of Nazi invasion was on the mind of every person in Britain, including the top brass of MI5, who were in constant fear of a fifth column of fascists forming among the far right. To pre-empt any organised attempt to help Hitler from within Britain’s borders, one of MI5’s top officers, Eric Roberts, was chosen to act as a Gestapo agent with the alias ‘Jack King’, who had stayed in Britain to identify Nazi sympathisers and organise them. Working out of a microphone-rigged flat in London’s Edgware Road, Roberts made contact with Marita Perigoe, a Swedish-German woman whose husband had been arrested for his involvement with Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists. MI5 considered her “crafty and dangerous… violently anti-British and so anxious to do anything in her power to help the enemy that it was felt that special attention should be paid to her”.



Durchlaßſchein Nr. L 2/033

Der — ~~Die~~ Jack King
(Vorname, Familienname, Beruf)

aus London
(ſtändiger Wohnort, Straße, Hausnummer)

iſt berechtigt, unter Vorlage des Paſſes (Paßerſatzes)¹)²)

Nr. - - - - ,

ausgeſtellt von Polizeidirektion Berlin

in der Zeit vom 25.3. 1939 bis zum - - - ~~19~~

die Grenze zwiſchen dem Reichsgebiet und dem unter den Schutz der deutſchen Wehrmacht geſtellten Gebieten an den amtlich zugelaſſenen Grenzübergangsſtellen zur Reiſe in

die unter den Schutz der deutſchen Wehrmacht geſtellten Gebiete
das Reichsgebiet¹)

und zurück zu überſchreiten.

London, den 25.3. 1939

(Stempel)

Gestapo-Einsatzgruppe London
(Dienſtſtelle)

(Unterſchrift)

¹) Nichtzutreffendes ſtreichen.
²) Bei Reichsangehörigen iſt nur ein Paß, bei Ausländern ein Paß oder Paßerſatz zuläſſig.

Left: A Gestapo Identity Card belonging to Eric Roberts, which shows his alias as Jack King

Special attention was exactly what she got from Roberts, who, after several meetings, had Perigoe convinced she was spying for Germany. Perigoe was a very keen ‘spy’ – too keen as it turned out, as she frequently committed her own acts of espionage without direction from Roberts, who found her unruly. Nevertheless, she appeared to trust Jack King, handing copied documents and stolen secrets over to Roberts in the belief that these would make their way to Nazi Germany.

With Perigoe’s confidence, Roberts was able to establish contact with other British fascists. Dozens of Nazi sympathisers attempted to pass especially sensitive information to the Germans through Roberts, including cutting-edge radar and jet propulsion developments, fuel dump locations and sabotage targets. He formulated a secret code that these would-be spies wrote their reports in, and MI5 even had Gestapo decorations forged for some of the most successful spies. Under the management of MI5 section B1C head Victor Rothschild and his assistant, Theresa Clay, Roberts identified nearly 500 people willing to actively support the German war effort and managed to nullify what would have been a dangerous threat to Britain at its most vulnerable point in WWII.

Tyler Kent was a cipher clerk at the U.S. embassy in London who was convicted espionage for passing secret documents to the Germans

Images: Getty Images, Alamy, The British Government, MI5

FOR YOU, THE WAR IS OVER

A Landing Craft Tank disgorges a stream of German POWs onto British shores in 1945. Britain held over 400,000 German prisoners during the war, and it's estimated that following the Third Reich's defeat around 25,000 elected to remain in Britain.

ge: Getty Images

A FRIENDLY INVASION

When the U.S. entered the war, Britain braced for an invasion of a different kind

WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON**

Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother inspects U.S. troops during a visit to an American airfield in wartime Britain

Some members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Corps (WAACs) enjoy a lunch with U.S. servicemen, 12 May 1943

In December 1941, the shocking attack on Pearl Harbor changed the course of WWII. The Empire of Japan's unexpected strike on the United States Pacific Fleet led to a change in U.S. policy and America, previously neutral in the war, entered the conflict on the side of the Allies. With that change in policy came a mass mobilisation of troops towards Europe: the Americans were bound for Britain.

The first arrivals

In early 1942, German U-boats were prowling the Atlantic in search of prey, but that January convoy A-10 made the dangerous journey from Brooklyn, New York, to Belfast, Northern Ireland. The convoy included two troopships, aboard which were 4,058 American soldiers; among them were the U.S. Army's 34th Infantry Division, a National Guard outfit known as the 'Red Bull' Division – the first to reach Ireland.

On 26 January 1942, Private Milburn Henke of Hutchinson, Minnesota, officially became the first American soldier to set foot on British soil. Henke was a member Minnesota's 133rd Infantry Regiment and became a familiar sight in newspapers, beaming and waving to the gathered crowd as he disembarked.

In fact, Henke wasn't the first, he was simply the man selected to face the press. As a local Belfast band played 'Marching Through Georgia', Henke and the other soldiers marched through the streets to the sound of a cheering crowd celebrating the new arrivals. The mood was ecstatic, though not without some disappointment: one or two ladies, watching the Americans, commented that they had thought they would be taller.

The arrival of the Americans was significant because it was proof at last that the threat of a German invasion was no longer as critical as it had seemed to be. Belfast had been the victim of air raids in spring 1941, but here were the Americans, who had safely navigated the Atlantic, finally ready to lend their might to the war effort.

> *"The Americans became regular visitors to neighbouring villages, bringing with them plenty of money and a dose of excitement"*

Over the course of the war, more than 2 million American servicemen were stationed throughout Britain and Northern Ireland or passed through on their way to the European and African theatres. Most found themselves welcomed warmly, but there were resentments bubbling too.

For more than two arduous years, the British people had lived through air raids and severe deprivation. Through rationing and other measures to help the war effort, they had got used to making do or just going without; there was nothing spare and precious opportunity to enjoy luxuries. Yet the Americans seemingly had everything, from nylons to chocolate and everything in between. Charming the locals and stealing the girls seemed to be second nature to them, giving rise to the famous complaint that they were "over-paid, over-sexed and over here".

American servicemen were issued with a booklet named *Instructions for American Servicemen in Britain*, which offered helpful hints on how to make friends among the locals. It contained such gems as "don't make fun of British speech or accents. You sound just as funny to them but they will be too polite to show it" and "the British don't know how to make a good cup of coffee. You don't know how to make a good cup of tea. It's an even swap."

Home from home

Newly arriving Americans were housed in any location that seemed appropriate, with many settling on airfields or in army camps and even requisitioned buildings, including country houses and similarly rarefied locations. Many of these houses became command bases or hospitals, while farm buildings, barns and other outbuildings were requisitioned to store vehicles and their drivers and technicians.

Up to 500,000 of the Americans were there with the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF), and they weren't just men: American women also came to Britain to serve with the American Red Cross of Women's Army Corps.

A programme of construction began that resulted in over 200 airfields being either newly built for the USAAF or occupied by them for the duration of the war. Each housed approximately 2,500 men, often in rural locations, with many around East Anglia and its environs.

The Americans became regular visitors to neighbouring villages, bringing with them plenty of money and a dose of excitement to communities suffering from the drudgery of war. Sometimes that excitement turned into romance and even marriage; after all, such happy endings made a welcome change from the making do and running for shelter.

As the war progressed and plans for D-Day began to take shape, more Americans arrived in Britain to ready themselves for the invasion. Because of the sheer number of men now billeted in the country, most were housed in so-called 'sausage camps', a name they acquired due to their shape.

The sausage camps were established throughout Britain and were generally one of two types: the first a larger camp holding thousands of men, and the second being a smaller site holding up to 250 men and dotted along a roughly 16-kilometre (ten-mile) stretch of road. In both cases, supplies and stocks of essentials would be maintained and the camp would be

American soldiers brought cash to English shops and romance, nylons and the Jitterbug to English girls

Milburn Henke arrives in Britain. He would go on to save the life of a comrade during fighting in North Africa

camouflaged to provide cover from Luftwaffe pilots hunting for targets.

In these camps the men would sleep in tents, while other areas would include kitchens and mess halls, latrines, stores, officers' quarters, briefing tents and more. As D-Day approached the camps were sealed, meaning that those within them were not allowed to leave. This was intended to minimise the risk of word leaking out, either accidentally or via spies, that invasion plans were close to being executed.

As the men based in the camps moved out for D-Day, a new group of men would move in and take their place. When these men moved out to Europe, a third group moved in, and so on for months, with a constant stream of troops taking the place of those who had just left. Even after the invasion some of these camps were maintained, either becoming POW camps or being used for other military purposes.

The Battle of Bamber Bridge

Among the troops coming from America to Britain were approximately 150,000 Black soldiers. Due to segregation most of these were in non-combat roles and were restricted to all-Black units, training and accommodation. These men built many of the new airfields that the USAAF relied on, but their arrival troubled the British Government. Segregation was alien to the people of Britain, and politicians didn't believe that the British people would adopt the practice. Rather, they preferred to accommodate this American policy tacitly, hoping that the locals didn't get too friendly with Black troops.

Among the populace, meanwhile, there were fears from some that not respecting segregationist rules practised by the Americans might damage relations. Shopkeepers wondered if white Americans would boycott their shops if they served Black troops, but African American journalist Roi Ottley had nothing but praise for most of the people he spoke to when covering the situation in England. While he did experience prejudice, he reported that it mostly came from officials; the public, meanwhile, seemed to be far more welcoming to people of colour than they were at home in America.

Of course, not every experience was a positive one. While British women socialised with and dated Black Americans, white servicemen accustomed to segregation found such behaviour worrying. Racial tensions eventually exploded in June 1943 at Bamber Bridge in Lancashire, when military policemen stopped a Black soldier, Private Eugene Nunn, for drinking alcohol while not wearing his dress uniform.

When villagers rallied to Nunn's defence and a bottle was thrown at the military police, they left, returning with reinforcements and a machine gun. The Black soldiers warned the villagers to stay indoors and raided the armoury, before a pitched battle broke out in the streets of the sleepy village. The battle raged for hours, resulting in the death of Private William Crossland, a Black soldier. Witnesses said he was shot in the back, but officially the U.S. military blamed crossfire. Thirty-five Black soldiers were court-martialled, with 28 convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, though some sentences were commuted in order that the men could continue to serve. To this day, the residents of Bamber Bridge are still calling for the convictions of mutiny to be overturned.

When the Americans arrived in Britain, a new phase of the war began both in Europe and on the home front. What Churchill called the "special relationship" was born out of this "friendly invasion", which began with Milburn Henke.

Stars in the skies

DURING WWII, THE STARS OF HOLLYWOOD CAME TO THE HOME FRONT

As the war raged, some of Hollywood's biggest names came to Britain either to serve or to entertain. Clark Gable trained as an air gunner and flew on five missions while making a recruitment film. Meanwhile, James Stewart was stationed in England and flew 20 combat missions as a bomber-commander, earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses and the Croix de Guerre.

Comedian Bob Hope toured U.S. Army bases in Britain with the USO (United Services Organisation). Included among his tour stops was Duxford, where the men had lost their commanding officer just days before. Marlene Dietrich also performed on USO Tours in Britain, eventually putting on approximately 500 shows across Europe in her efforts to keep morale up. Even Scarlett O'Hara herself returned from Hollywood to her native England in 1941, when Vivien Leigh performed charitable war work before entertaining troops in North Africa.

For the stars who flocked to foreign shores to entertain, serve tea or fight for freedom, it was anything but business as usual. Their presence really did build morale and give troops serving overseas a reminder of home and what they were fighting for. For Germans like Dietrich, it was a chance to signal defiance to the regime that had seized her homeland and remind everyone that they had friends from Germany too.

Marlene Dietrich not only entertained during the war: she also housed German and French exiles

Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth hid among the crowds outside Buckingham Palace on VE Day

A NEW STRUGGLE: REBUILDING BRITAIN

The fighting in Europe was over, but lifting up a shattered nation would be a battle of a different kind

WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON**

On 8 May 1945, Germany finally surrendered: the war in Europe was over. Though the conflict was still being fought against Japan, VE Day saw millions of people come together to celebrate the victory over Germany and the long-awaited return to peace in Europe.

Spontaneous parties and gatherings broke out all over the world as the news spread across the globe, and in every corner of Britain people hung bunting and flags, lit bonfires and danced in the streets. Even Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth, the heir to the throne, stole out to join London crowds who danced the night away. Hidden among their fellow revellers, the young princesses cheered as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to share the joy of their subjects. It truly was a night like no other.

On the morning of VE Day, which had been declared a national holiday, Churchill sought assurances that there was enough beer in London to keep revellers happy and lifted rationing for red, white and blue bunting. Parades, church services and street parties were held around the country and restaurants offered special 'victory menus'. At St Paul's Cathedral, ten consecutive services of thanksgiving were held, each attended by thousands of people.

The royal family made multiple appearances throughout the day, and at 3 p.m. Winston Churchill addressed the nation on the wireless. A little later he appeared on the balcony of the Ministry of Health to give an impromptu, heartfelt speech. To the thousands who had gathered to hear him, the prime minister had one message – "this is your victory".

By midnight, 50,000 revellers were crowded into Piccadilly Circus, dancing, drinking and embracing. Strangers became friends that night, and people brought gramophones and instruments into the streets to keep the party going. Licensing hours were extended, and the revelry seemed as though it would never end. Of course, it had to.

After the joy of VE Day came reflection, both for those who had lost loved ones and for the country at large. The celebration had been joyous, but the comedown brought with it a sense of anti-climax, as a country that had known deprivation and hardships felt the weariness of the long struggle to keep morale up weighing heavily now the fighting in Europe was over. On the other side of the world, the war still raged, and rationing and other difficulties would continue to plague Britain for years.

> *"Spontaneous parties and gatherings broke out all over the world... and in every corner of Britain people hung bunting and flags, lit bonfires and danced in the streets"*

The enormous financial cost of fighting the war had left the country practically bankrupt, and its empire lay in ruins. Britain's economic recovery would be slow and characterised by the age of austerity. Bomb-damaged cities had to be rebuilt, the coffers needed to be refilled and the modern era embraced. In an age that saw industrial nationalisation, the birth of the welfare state and the development of the National Health Service, the beleaguered people of Britain would have precious few reasons to hold street parties again.

A new government

At the general election in 1945, a surprise landslide brought Attlee's Labour government into power. The governing coalition had dissolved in May, triggering the election that saw the Conservatives comprehensively thrown out of power. It was the first majority Labour government and one that had been voted in on the promise of widespread social reform. While Churchill had been the perfect wartime leader, his past was associated with the poverty and unemployment of the interwar years and now the public saw the future as a socialist one, dedicated to rebuilding Britain socially as well as physically.

When the U.S. unexpectedly pulled the plug on Lend Lease in August 1945, however, the new government found itself with a sudden drain on the already hobbled Treasury. Bankruptcy was a very real possibility.

Complete financial collapse was staved off only by the Anglo-American loan, a $3.75-billion (approximately $60.5 billion today) bailout negotiated by British economist John Maynard Keynes and American diplomat William L. Clayton. Lend Lease had seen the U.S. Government provide materiel at no cost on the basis that the equipment was vital for the defence of the U.S. and its allies. These goods were to be used until they were destroyed or returned once the war was over. With the war draining British funds and drastically reducing exports, the country had come to rely on Lend Lease for essential commodities. When Lend Lease ended in 1945, Britain simply could not afford to finance these essentials any longer.

Keynes was sent by the government to the U.S. to negotiate for additional funding, using Britain's contribution to the war effort as his bargaining chip. He managed to agree on an interest rate of two per cent, which would be paid back over a term of 50 years. Though the interest rate was very generous, the cost of paying back the loan plunged the country into even more financial difficulty.

Chief among the causes of Britain's worsening economic situation was the convertibility clause, in which transactions that had begun in stirling could be converted into dollars. The result of this was a run on Britain's dollar reserves, which left the economy gravely exposed.

Labour's nationalisation of the steel industry caused controversy. It proved a short-lived endeavour

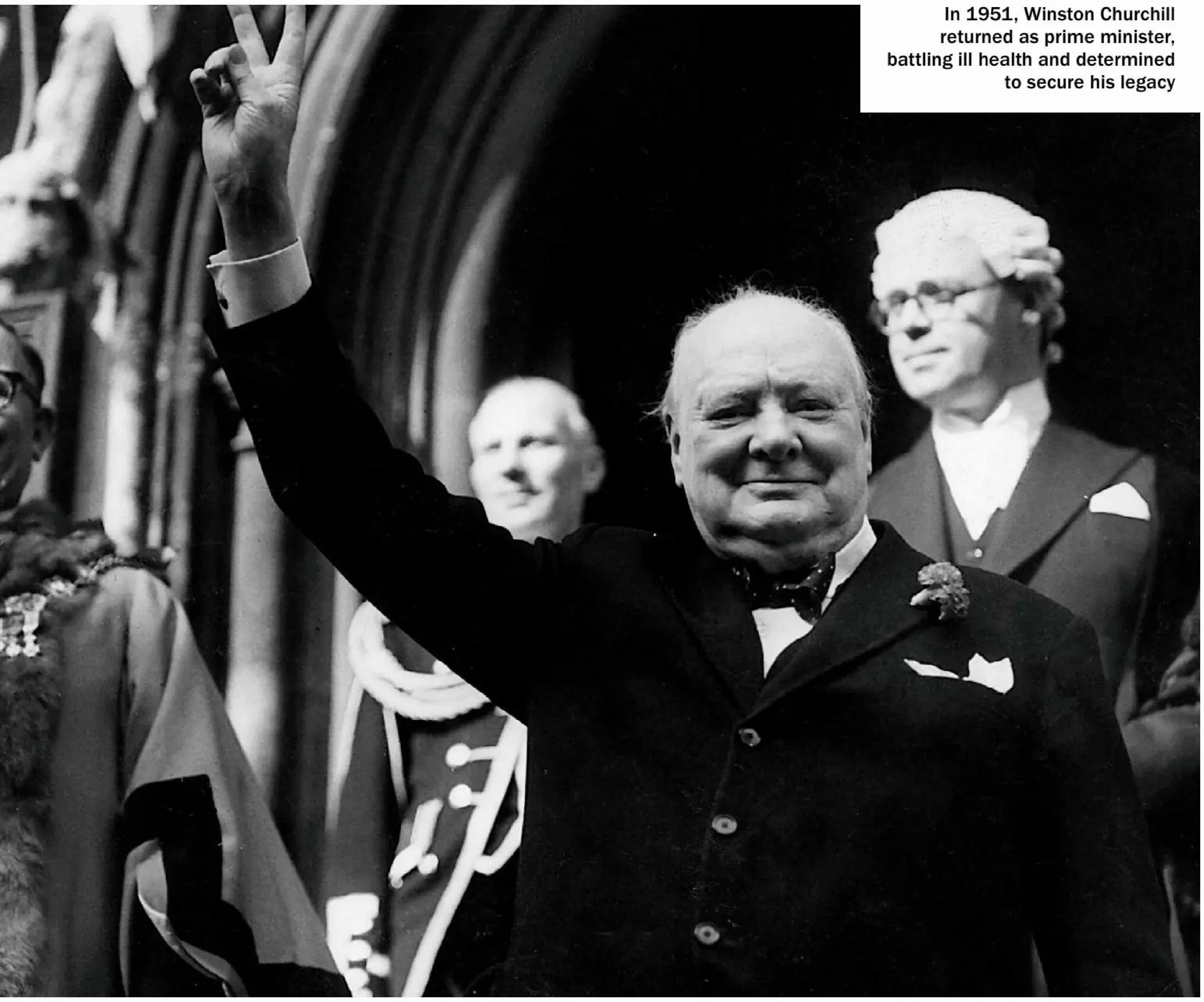
Bread on the ration

On VE Day, Britain had partied until the sun came up, but the reality of the dawning age of austerity soon clouded the national mood. Rationing as a policy would continue for a further nine years and, far from light at the end of the tunnel, on 21 July 1946, things got darker still.

It had been hoped that peacetime would bring a new dawn to the beleaguered nation, but in the summer of 1946 bread was finally rationed. The household staple had been close to being rationed late in the war, and now this dire cutback had become a depressing reality. The decision to ration bread was a hammer blow to the nation's morale, and the over-complicated system for dividing up the ration led to criticism from the press and public alike.

The decision to ration bread incurred the wrath of the British Housewives' League, who argued that there was no cause or benefit to

> *"The cost of paying back the loan plunged the country into even more financial difficulty"*



In 1951, Winston Churchill returned as prime minister, battling ill health and determined to secure his legacy

A fading force

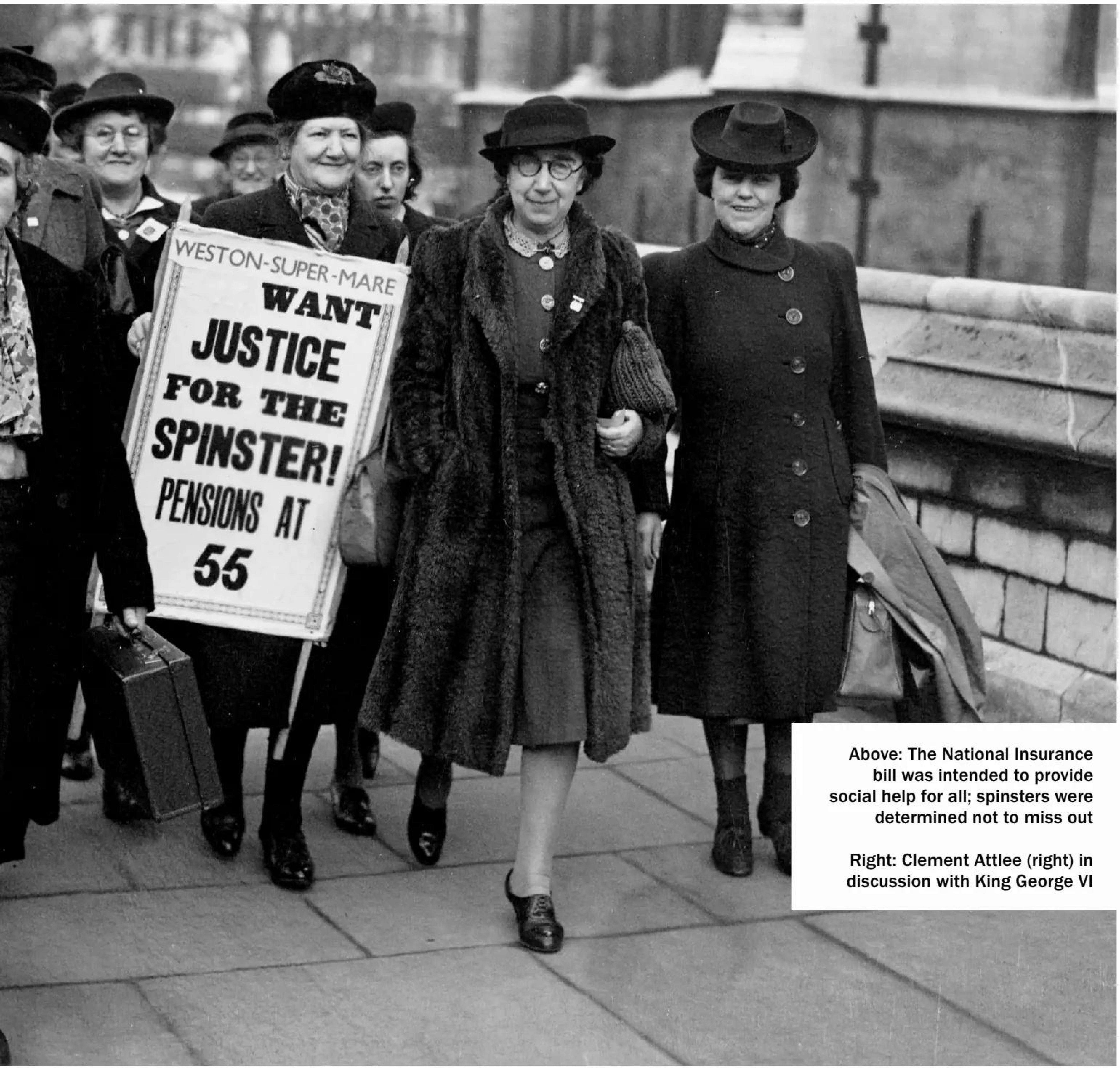
AS THE SMOKE OF WAR CLEARED, BRITAIN'S EMPIRE CRUMBLED

WWII left the British economy in tatters and the balance of world power forever changed. Once a superpower, now the country was reduced to begging for American loans simply to avoid total financial ruin. The British Empire would not survive, and incoming Prime Minister Clement Attlee promised India independence by no later than 30 June 1948, unable to stave off the inevitable.

On 12 March 1947, President Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine, which promised American support for any democratic nation that was facing threats from authoritarian powers. Aimed at containing the growing power and global influence of the Soviet Union, the Doctrine called for $400 million in financial and military support for Greece and Turkey. Britain had previously provided this support for the two countries but was no longer able to do so due to its own perilous economic position.

In the Truman Doctrine, the president promised support for all free people, tacitly pledging America's role as a champion against the spread of communism. It was a role that the country would take seriously in the decades to come as the Cold War chilled the world.

President Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine to counter the growth of the USSR



Above: The National Insurance bill was intended to provide social help for all; spinsters were determined not to miss out

Right: Clement Attlee (right) in discussion with King George VI

the ration, which would hardly save enough flour to make it worthwhile. The National Loaf, a fortified wholemeal bread with added vitamins and calcium, had been introduced across the country early in the war. It had even been served to Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady of the United States, when she visited Buckingham Palace in 1942. Now, though, even the National Loaf was put on the ration.

The welfare state

Soon after winning victory, the Labour Party moved to nationalise several sectors of the British economy, with a particular focus on industry. The Attlee government swiftly enacted a policy of nationalisation, which continued from 1946 until 1951 and began with the coal industry and the Bank of England. The nationalisation programme eventually drew in approximately 20 per cent of the nation's industries. Also included in the nationalisation plans were roads and railways, civil aviation, and electricity and gas. Most controversial of all, however, was the nationalisation of the profitable steel industry, which took place in 1951 and was opposed by the Conservatives. Within two years of their return to power in 1951, the Tories had denationalised steel.

In 1942, Liberal economist William Beveridge had prepared the Beveridge Report, in which he proposed sweeping reforms to the social welfare system with a focus on five key points: want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. Beveridge's work laid the foundations for the welfare state and the creation of a National Health Service, which would provide every man, woman and child in the country with cradle-to-grave healthcare, free at the point of delivery.

In 1946, the government introduced the National Insurance Act, which was aimed at tackling Beveridge's five key points and creating a more equitable society. Adults were required to buy a weekly stamp, which served as a contribution to their National Insurance payments, thus entitling them to benefits ranging from unemployment support to widows' benefits and an old age pension. In 1948, they followed this with the National Assistance Act, aimed at providing a safety net to those who could not work and could not pay their stamp.

At the same time, housing shortages caused by the war were rampant and building materials in short supply (approximately 750,000 new homes were needed). New legislation ensured that rents were kept under control, but the housing shortage continued to be acute for many years.

As Labour juggled this, education reform and other social policies, the reality of post-war life hit hard. Yet it wasn't all austerity and the Labour government made one particularly momentous move. Among the social reforms they introduced was one key element: the National Health Service Act, which came into force on 5 July 1948.

Aneurin Bevan, Attlee's health minister, turned the creation of the NHS into a cherished project. At its heart were three things: first, the service should serve everyone; secondly, it would be free to use; and thirdly, care would be decided by need, not the ability to pay for it. Without exception, the nation would care for its citizens.

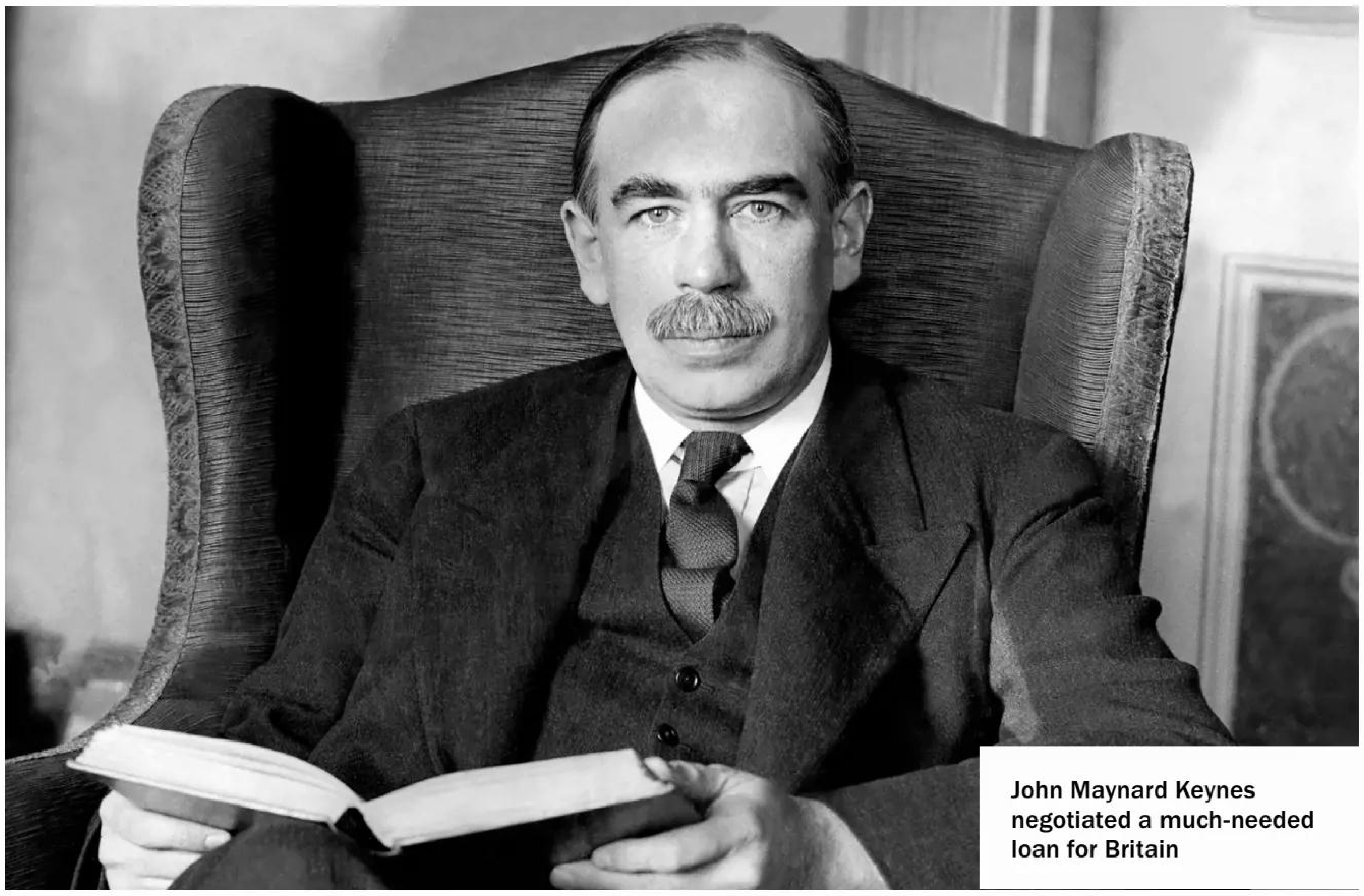
Bread rationing in 1946 saw queues at bakeries and a drop in national morale

Churchill returns

In the 1950 general election, the Labour Party held onto power by the narrowest of margins: just five seats. After 18 months, Attlee called another election for 25 October 1951, believing that this would solidify his majority.

The result was not what the prime minister had hoped for. Despite winning 48.8 per cent of the vote, the Labour Party did not win the election; instead, the Conservative Party were victorious, with a majority of 17 seats. They had capitalised on the collapse of support for the Liberals, winning the seats that had once been theirs. To this day, it remains the highest share of the vote that the Labour Party has ever won but the election sent them into opposition for years.

At 77 years old and in poor health following a stroke, Winston Churchill returned to Downing Street as prime minister. The world he had known had changed forever, but Churchill was determined to see out his second term – tumultuous though it would prove to be.



John Maynard Keynes negotiated a much-needed loan for Britain

Aneurin Bevan, the founder of the NHS, travelled to Lancashire in 1947 to chat to patients

BREAD RATIONING
You may
DEPOSIT YOUR BU COUPONS
at this shop to obtain
your ration of bread
GOODS VALUES IN BU's
BREAD RATIONING
DEPOSIT YOUR
BU COUPONS HERE

The complicated new rationing system incurred the wrath of a nation's housewives

BRITAIN'S HOME FRONT

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Bookazine Editorial
Editor **Charles Ginger**
Senior Designer **Adam Markiewicz**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**
Managing Director **Grainne McKenna**

All About History Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
Art Editor **Kym Winters**
Editor in Chief **Tim Williamson**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Cover images
Getty Images, Alamy

Photography
All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk
For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

GPSR EU RP (for authorities only)
eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317, Tallinn, Estonia
hello@eucompliancepartner.com, +3375690241

Britain's Home Front First Edition (AHB6666)
© 2025 Future Publishing Limited

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this bookazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2025 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

FUTURE

Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.

Future plc is a public
company quoted on the
London Stock Exchange
(symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Kevin Li Ying**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**

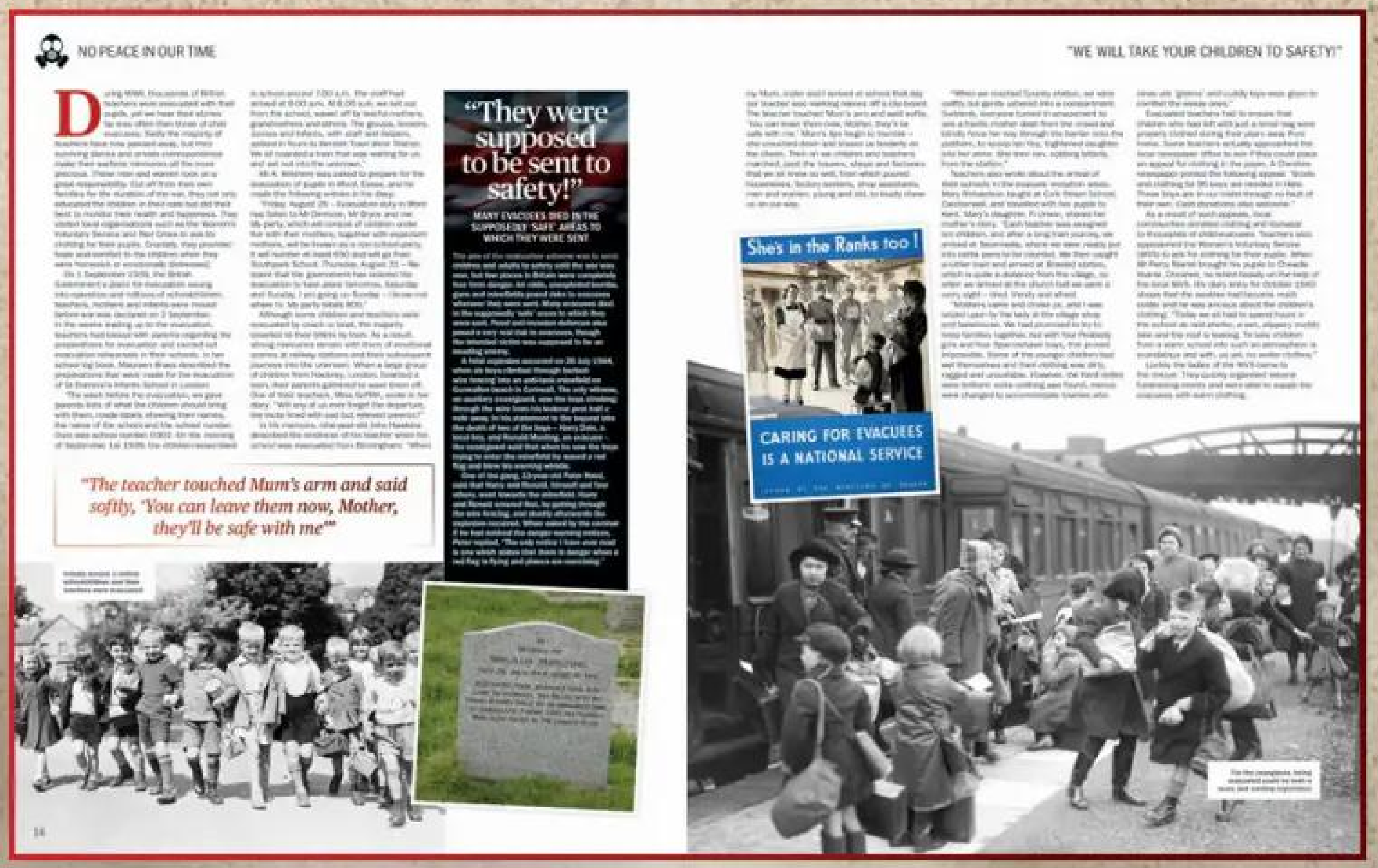
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Part of the
ALL ABOUT HISTORY
bookazine series

Widely Recycled

ipso. Regulated

BRITAIN'S
HOME FRONT



NO PEACE IN OUR TIME

"WE WILL TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO SAFETY!"

"They were supposed to be sent to safety!"

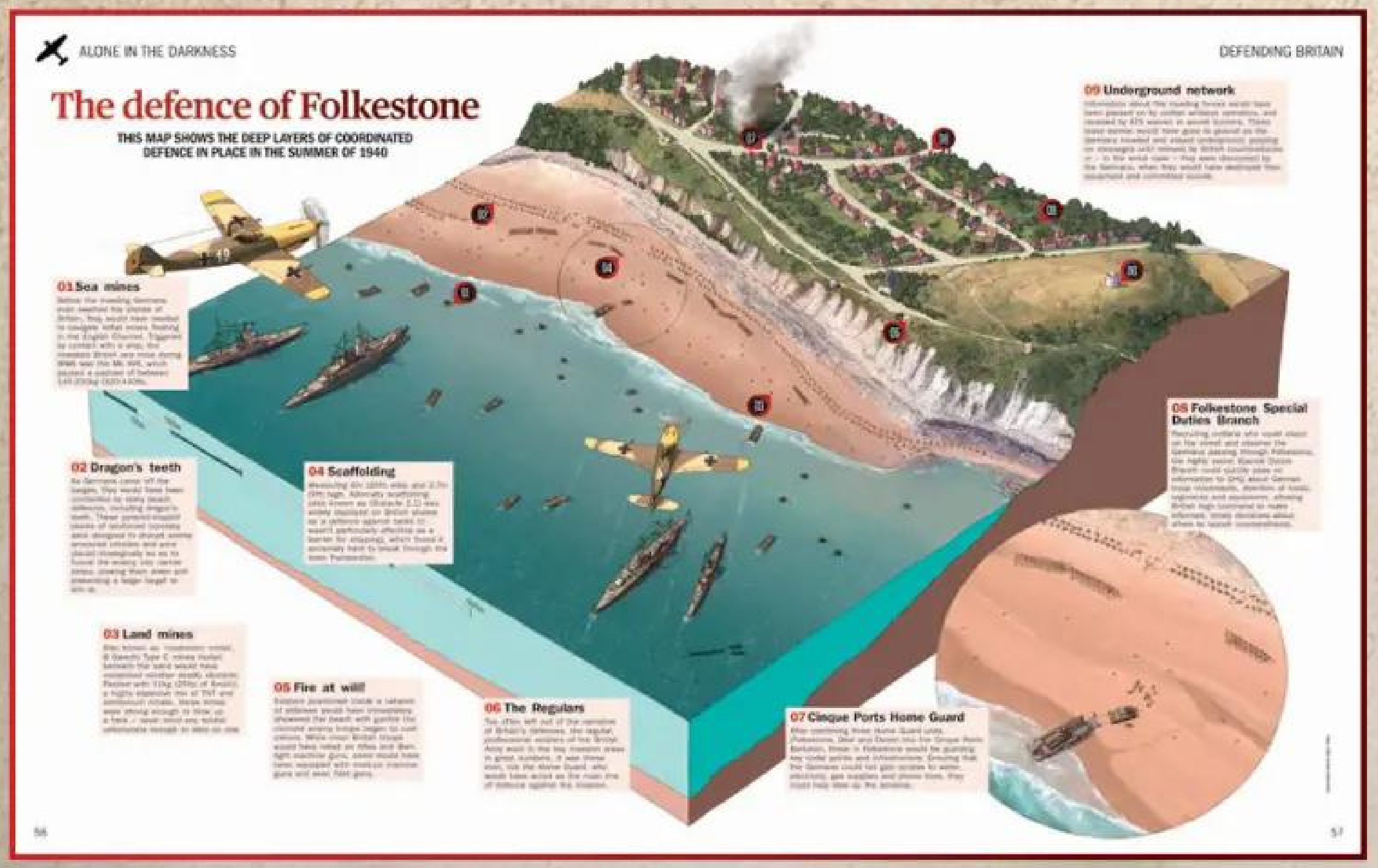
MANY EVACUEES DIED IN THE SUPPOSEDLY 'SAFE' AREAS TO WHICH THEY WERE SENT

"The teacher touched Mum's arm and said softly, 'You can leave them now, Mother, they'll be safe with me'"

She's in the Ranks too!
CARING FOR EVACUEES IS A NATIONAL SERVICE

OPERATION PIED PIPER

Inside the mission to whisk Britain's children to safety far away from the Luftwaffe's bombs



ALONE IN THE DARKNESS

DEFENDING BRITAIN

The defence of Folkestone

THIS MAP SHOWS THE DEEP LAYERS OF COORDINATED DEFENCE IN PLACE IN THE SUMMER OF 1940

01 Sea mines
02 Dragon's teeth
03 Land mines
04 Scaffolding
05 Fire at will!
06 The Regulars
07 Cinque Ports Home Guard
08 Folkestone Special Duties Branch
09 Underground network

BEACH BATTLEMENTS

Discover the lethal array of defences that lined the shores of England's south coast

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

MAKE DO AND MEND

Feed-sack fashion

MAKE DO AND MEND WASN'T THE FIRST TIME A LITTLE INGENUITY WAS REQUIRED WHEN IT CAME TO WARDROBES

"Women were able to wear clothes that reflected their personal tastes"

REINFORCE CHILDREN'S CLOTHES
They will last twice as long

A CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY

How strict clothing rations inspired a wave of creative garments and brought people together

BRITAIN'S FIFTH COLUMN

BRITAIN'S FIFTH COLUMN

Musicians, aristocrats, war heroes and even members of Parliament conspired to turn Britain over to the Nazis. But for the bravery of British intelligence agents, they may have succeeded

WORDS BEN BIGGS

Oswald Mosley 1896-1980

Barry Domvile 1878-1971

HITLER'S BRITISH HELPERS

Meet the traitors who planned to aid the enemy and betray their country in its hour of need

BOOKAZINE